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SALT OF THE EARTH

Mrs. ALFRED SIDGWICK

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SALT OF THE EARTH

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BY

MRS. ALFRED SIDGWICK

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I

IN 1870, when Germany went to war with France, Gustav Müller was in China. He was a youth of twenty at the time and the only son of his mother, who was a widow. He did not go back to Germany to fight for his country, but stayed on in China achieving prosperity. He became a partner in his firm, and at the age of forty returned to Europe. By this time he had married a lady who, like himself, was German by birth, but who had lived with her parents in China and mainly amongst English people since she was a child. She had one brother, but he had been educated in Germany and had settled in Berlin: so that his sister had not seen him since they were children together in Hongkong.

When the Müllers returned to Europe, Mrs. Müller expressed a wish to visit her brother, who was now a married man with several children older than her own. So they went to Berlin for a short time, and afterwards to Heidelberg, where Mr. Müller's grandmother and mother were still living in an old-fashioned house with a garden full of fruit trees. Their three children were with them, and for years to come talked of Heidelberg and the fruit trees which the old ladies would shake for them till golden plums and ripe pears came tumbling down upon the grass. Heidelberg became a garden of the Hesperides to these little folk while they were still small, and they often asked to

return there. But they never did. When Mr. Müller went to Germany on business he visited his old home; and when he took his children away in August they went to English seaside places—usually to Cromer or Scarborough.

The Müllers had taken a house with a good-sized garden in the Avenue Road in St. John's Wood, furnished it comfortably and settled down there to a quiet family life. Mr. Müller had a long day's work six times a week in the City and enjoyed a peaceful Sunday at home. Mrs. Müller was busy and happy with her house and her children. They had friends and acquaintances, but while the children were young they did not go out or entertain much. Two boys and a girl had come from China with them, and they had been christened Sigismund, Joachim and Thekla. In 1891 another girl arrived and they called her Brenda.

"I want an English name this time," said Mrs. Müller. "I am sorry our other children are called Sigismund, Joachim and Thekla."

"Why are you sorry?"

"It sounds foreign."

"Not to us, and they are our children."

"But they will grow up in England and no one English can say the names. Nanna calls the boys Mundy and Jem."

"I want my children to remember that they have German blood in their veins," said Mr. Müller.

Mrs. Müller did not argue the point with her husband because at that time it did not interest her much. Although she had been born in Germany she had not lived there since she was three, and when she had stayed in Berlin two years ago her heart had not warmed to her country. The Germany she found there was so unlike the Germany of her father's and even of her husband's reminiscences that she felt chilled and disappointed. She supposed that they must be what they so insistently proclaimed them-

selves, the most civilized and the most formidable Power in the world; but after an intimate fortnight in her brother Wilhelm's house she was thankful that she did not have to live amongst them.

As the years went on Mr. Müller's prosperity established itself firmly, and he was able to give his children the best education to be had in his adopted country. He grumbled a little at the expense of it, and sometimes pointed out that the boys would have learned more in the Fatherland and cost less; but the day came when the thought of Mundy and Jem in the Fatherland was absurd. They were fine upstanding boys who forgot at Rugby the little German they had learned at home, were inclined to call themselves Muller without any modifying dots, did well at games, and when the time came to choose a career looked with longing eyes at the Army. Mr. Müller only half liked the idea for Mundy and would not hear of it for Jem.

"If ever there is war between Germany and England, my son will be fighting against his father's country," he objected.

"Rather! I'm English," said Mundy, and passed high into Woolwich that same year; for he had brains and worked hard. Jem, much against the grain in the beginning, went into business, first with friends of his father, then to China, then back to London in his father's firm. In 1910, at the age of twenty-six, he was still unmarried and living at home. Mundy had a billet in Egypt and Thekla had married a Major Wilmot and lived at Aldershot. Brenda had left school a year ago and was working at music. That is to say, she had piano and singing lessons, went to concerts assiduously and practiced two hours a day. Otherwise she led the ordinary life of a grown-up girl in a well-to-do rather old-fashioned home. She had not taken to philanthropy, and though she read the modern drama and saw it when she could, she was not

in revolt against her surroundings. On the contrary, she was extremely happy at home and took a keen interest in the garden.

Brenda was the only one of her father's children who took any interest in her father's country or recognized any link with it. Perhaps one reason was that she had never seen the enchanted garden, but only heard of it and longed to see it. Then her father loved Heidelberg and had kindled in his youngest child some reflection of his own feelings. When he spoke of the ancient town dominated by the ruined castle and sheltered by vine-clad hills, when he left Heidelberg and carried her in fancy to the Rhine, the sacred river which guards and adorns the Fatherland, when he told her stories of the forest, stories of Christmas, stories of cold, brilliant winters in little old-world towns, she looked at the dusty London streets and asked him why he did not go back to the land of his birth. Sometimes he answered evasively, sometimes he talked of his wife and his children, once he pointed out that more than half his life had been passed amongst the English and that he actually felt more at home amongst them than amongst his own country people.

"But I tell you what we will do," he said. "In June, when your mother is with Thekla, you and I will have a little holiday and go to Heidelberg and the Rhine. It is not right that my mother and grandmother should know none of my children. They reproach me whenever I see them and I have no reply."

"There must be a reply though," urged Brenda. "Why do they never come here? Why do we never go to Germany?"

"My grandmother is much too old to travel. She is nearly ninety. My mother would not leave her. We ought to visit them, and this spring we will do so."

That had happened a year ago, when Brenda was

eighteen and Thekla was expecting her second child. Mr. Müller and his youngest daughter had started directly they were sure all was well with Thekla, and had a delightful month at Heidelberg and on the Rhine. Brenda had been presented to her grandmother and her great-grandmother, and had dazzled them by her clothes, her beauty, her manners, her amiable temper and her knowledge of German. Never in her life had she been so much a thing to wonder at, never had she been so adored. The garden of the Hesperides turned into a small overgrown plot overlooked by other houses and neglected; and in June there were no golden plums for the old ladies to shake down for her. But though the garden was a disappointment the beauty of Heidelberg was not, and she came away vowing she would return next year to see the castle again by moonlight and to have coffee every afternoon with grandmamma and great-grandmamma. They went back by way of the Rhine, and Brenda arrived in London with her inward eye full of just such pictures as she had expected to find. She had seen the river that Germans love as Britons love the sea, she had wandered about old towns with narrow cobble-stoned streets and gabled houses, she had bought bits of blue and gray pottery in market places, she had talked with peasants, she had heard melodious little operas never heard in England and she had walked to the theater by daylight in a high-necked gown. She had sat in public gardens listening to a band and watching her father and every one else drink enormous mugs of beer. She had eaten *Pumpernickel* and many varieties of sausage and mountains of asparagus; she had seen *Plumeaux* and rooms with polished floors and no carpets. She had gathered lilies of the valley, looked at the Rhine from ruined castles and listened to *Volkslieder* sung on Sundays by prosperous-looking country-folk. She had indignantly watched women do field work no women do in England, and she had

filled a sketch book with her impressions of abnormally stout elderly males, little girls with pigtails and little boys with shaved heads. But as a matter of fact she had not got to know much about modern Germany. She had only seen the outside of life there, and into the inner life she had woven poetry and a quaint simplicity. So when any one spoke in her presence of a new Germany, efficient, material and dangerously aggressive, she turned to one of her dream pictures in which a stork's nest and a church tower looked along the sleepy years at troops of little fair-haired children playing, learning, working, living and dying in the fear of God.

Then, disturbing her dreams, in the year following her visit to the Rhine came her uncle Wilhelm Erdmann and his son Lothar, who was an officer in the German army.

Mrs. Müller had not seen her brother for nearly twenty years, but the prospect of his visit seemed to oppress rather than delight her. Before he arrived Brenda could not understand that.

"If I had not seen Mundy or Jem for twenty years, I should be wild with joy at meeting them again," she said. "What is twenty years between brothers and sisters?"

"Your uncle and I have been separated all our lives," said Mrs. Müller. "When I was a child in China he was at school in Berlin. Besides, I am very glad to entertain your uncle and cousin. When you are fifty-two you don't go wild over anything. You take life calmly."

"I hope my uncle won't be like his photograph," said Brenda.

"You can hardly expect him to be very unlike," Mrs. Müller pointed out with her usual common sense. "What is wrong with it?"

From Brenda's point of view a good deal was wrong with it, but she could not enlarge on this theme to

her mother. The portraits of Herr Erdmann had small piggy eyes, whiskers, heavy features, a corpulent body and badly cut clothes. Nevertheless, as Brenda dressed for dinner on the night of their arrival, her incurable romantic fancy painted him in agreeable colors that the first moment of reality brushed away. As she came down the stairs she saw her father in the hall and with him two men in odd-looking checked ulsters, both tall and powerfully made, one old, one young, one stout, one rather lean and bony. A large trunk and some smaller packages encumbered the hall. As Brenda approached her mother came out of the drawing-room and greeted her guests cordially. She introduced her daughter to them, there was a moment of greeting and then both gentlemen were seen to be out of humor.

"A trunk has been lost," said Herr Erdmann.

"My trunk has been lost," said Lothar.

"I saw it at Dover. The confusion at Dover is scandalous."

"With us such things cannot happen."

"Why can't they happen with you?" said Brenda, following the men into the drawing-room. She was a little surprised that they should march in before her, but she wished so much to like them that she decided such trifles did not matter and must not count.

"We have system," said her uncle.

"We have order," said her cousin.

"Are you going to a ball on the night of our arrival?" said Herr Erdmann, glaring at Brenda's white gown which showed her pretty neck and arms.

"I'm not going anywhere," said Brenda. "Won't you sit down."

"Of course I shall sit down when I am tired of standing. What has become of your father and mother? Why are they not listening to what I have to say about my son's trunk?"

"They are sending Bailey back to Charing Cross for it," said Brenda, and at that moment Mrs. Müller came into the room to ask Lothar for the key.

"If I could not find it, your chauffeur will not find it either," said Herr Erdmann when his sister had gone again.

"You never know what Bailey will do or not do," said Brenda. "He is a man of resource."

"What is resource?" asked Herr Erdmann. "Always you English talk of resource. Is it a substitute for the system you have not? I am glad we Germans do not depend on resource. I prefer to see my trunks at the end of the journey."

Father and son had hardly been ten minutes in the house, but Brenda had made up her mind about the older man already. He was a beast: a ponderous, sour-tempered beast without the least resemblance to her mother. Cousin Lothar was not so easy to catalogue. In a uniform he probably looked well. He held himself like a ramrod and had a conquering air that if it had been amiable might have been seductive. But his eyes were chilly and his voice and intonation like nothing she had ever heard. When he spoke German his gutturals had the effect of a snarl, shrill and arrogant. His English was mediocre, but he persisted in speaking it and got quite huffy at dinner because Brenda had helped him out.

"I do not wish to be helped," he said. "I know English perfectly and only require a little practice. It is an unpractical language."

"Is it?" said Brenda.

"Of course it is. You spell one way and you pronounce another, which is absurd."

"I hate England," said his father.

"But you have only been in the country a few hours," said Brenda.

"We know all about England, my beautiful cousin," said Lothar. "Some day we shall surprise you with

our knowledge. You, I hope, are a good German. How could you be otherwise? Was not your father born in Heidelberg and your mother in Berlin?"

"Besides," said his father, "we have seen more muddle and mismanagement since we arrived than you could find in a year with us. In Dover we could get no food and Lothar has lost his trunk."

"Your trunk has come, sir," said the parlormaid, who had been out of the room for a moment and now returned.

"Impossible!" cried Lothar.

"Your fool of a man has probably brought the wrong one," said Herr Erdmann to his sister in German, but he got up heavily and waddled into the hall. When he came back he spoke to his son.

"It is your trunk," he said.

"I am glad it has been found," said Mrs. Müller.

"It should never have been lost," said her brother.

Mr. Müller was more silent than usual in the presence of his wife's relations; but Brenda, whose affection for her father taught her to interpret every variation of his mood, knew that he felt as much out of sympathy with them as she herself did. He was the most lovable of men, patient, shrewd, honorable, generous and kindly in his dealings. He had good hazel eyes that Brenda had inherited from him—eyes that were dreamy at times, but could flash with humor and when aroused, with anger. He was a tall, thin man with silvery hair and a quiet courteous manner: never asserting himself loudly, never quarreling. Neither he nor his wife had bred their children in an atmosphere of national prejudice. They had spoken naturally of their German origin, not considering it a drawback nor a reason for self-adulation. The arrogance displayed by the Erdmanns was a new manifestation in that house and a jarring note.

"How they harp on England," Brenda said to her mother, who went into her daughter's room for a

moment at bedtime to make some arrangement for next day. "If they think so ill of us, why do they talk of us so much?"

"They say we are envious of them."

Brenda laughed.

"What have they got that we want? Not manners, anyway."

Mrs. Müller looked at her daughter, and could not help laughing, too, because Brenda began to gobble and guzzle as her uncle had done at table; and then cried in a snarling falsetto—

"In Germany when we eat we let you know it. We are not hypocrites."

"But it is not manners to mimic a guest," said Mrs. Müller.

"How long are they going to stay?"

"Some time. Lothar wants to visit Chatham and Portsmouth and Aldershot."

"What for?"

"I suppose such places interest him as he is in the army."

"He'll only say everything is in a muddle. I should show him the Albert Memorial. That's tidy."

"I shall be glad when Jem comes back from Paris," said Mrs. Müller. "He is always such a help."

II

JEM, who was away on business, put off his return for a week. Mr. Müller was in the City all day and Mrs. Müller devoted herself to her brother, who was exacting and indefatigable. It fell to Brenda to entertain her cousin, and he usually wanted to do something his father had done already or did not want to do. He liked to have Brenda with him on his expeditions, and she liked going because he took her to places she had never seen before. She said soon that though she had lived in London all her life she had not known it till now, and every day she brought back glowing accounts of the journeys she had made in Lothar's company, of the odd unexpected questions he asked and of his interest in things she had never observed.

"He has filled a little book with plans and figures," she said one night at dinner. "He says he can't draw and he is bored in picture galleries, but he can make the neatest little maps I ever saw. Sometimes he makes them from memory, and we go back next day to prove them. I am going to help him if I can."

There was a moment of tense silence that Brenda felt but did not understand. She saw Lothar's face, masked and non-committal, she saw her father look up uneasily and then resume his dinner. In 1910 a good Liberal like Mr. Müller had no fear of Germany. Was not his Germany that land of vineyards and romance quite lately seen through tourist spectacles and always remembered through a nursery haze?

"Map-making is a bad habit," said Lothar. "I

contracted it at school. Wherever I go I make little maps. I have excellent ones of Thuringen."

He certainly was original and intelligent, Brenda confided to her mother after dinner. He would go back to Germany without having seen the Albert Memorial, but he would know many things the ordinary Londoner did not know. He had odd fancies too. He wanted to look at London after dark from the heights.

"There are no heights," said Mrs. Müller.

But Brenda, instructed by her cousin, knew better. There were various points from which the view of London was most interesting, and one night when there was no moon he took her with him and showed her the winding river with lights on it, the moving trains and the dome of St. Paul's that was the landmark by which he found other public buildings. The great city spread as far as they could see, twinkling its lights through the smoke hanging over it like a veil that covered but did not obscure. They stayed a long time making out how far the City looked from Westminster, and the northern from the southern suburbs when you were guided by the river and the varying brilliance of the lights.

"Now he wants to visit our flying grounds at Hendon and Aldershot," said Brenda next day. "He would like to fly himself, but Uncle Wilhelm is against it. I suppose we can ask ourselves to Aldershot for a day. Thekla would give us lunch and Jack would show us round."

Mrs. Müller saw no objection, and the visit was arranged. The only person who felt uneasy was Uncle Wilhelm, who could not see his son and niece going about by themselves in this way without commenting on the laxity of English manners and presumably of English morals.

"Fortunately my son is an honorable man," he said to his sister. "Either he will show Brenda that he has no intentions or he will ask her in marriage. But I

disapprove of marriage between cousins and still more of international marriages. I hope Lothar will marry a German girl."

"So do I," said Mrs. Müller with spirit. "I should not like such a marriage at all, but I am not in the least afraid of it."

"And pray why would you not like it?" said Herr Erdmann, bridling. "Lothar is a brilliant match, I can tell you. He has money, he is a first-rate officer and well received in high military circles, and no one can say that he is not a *schneidiger Kerl.*"

"I am sure he is," said Mrs. Müller, "but I agree with you about the reasons against such a marriage, and if I thought there was the least danger I should send Brenda to Aldershot for a week."

"Brenda is not ugly," said Herr Erdmann. "If she filled out a little——"

"In England Brenda is very much admired," said Mrs. Müller.

"So is my Elsa in Germany," said Herr Erdmann. "She is at least twice Brenda's size. She will make a very powerful woman. Mina is small and thin, but she married when she was seventeen and has an arduous life."

"I hope to keep Brenda at home for years and years," said Mrs. Müller. "I should not break my heart if she refused to marry at all."

"That I call selfish," said her brother. "The lot of an old maid is a miserable one. She has nothing to do and every one despises her."

"It may be so in Germany," began Mrs. Müller, but her brother did not allow her to finish.

"It is so all over the world," he said. "What I say is true."

As Brenda was only nineteen she had not had a wide experience of wooers yet, but she certainly began to perceive about the time of the visit to Aldershot that Lothar's first formal gallantry of manner

was rapidly changing to one more intimate and possessive. He seemed to resent the presence of strangers in the railway carriage, his chilly eye had a gleam of admiration in it as it rested on her and he often tried to find out her ideas of Germany and the Germans; but all that she loved in Germany he laughed at, denied or condemned.

"Stork's nests are insanitary," he pronounced. "The police should deal with them. Yes. There are many in the north, too, but there is nothing interesting in them. I could make one myself with straw and twigs."

"I never read poetry," he continued. "I had to at school but now I've other things to do. A nation that is pursuing a great *Welt Politik* leaves poetry to women and children."

"But women and children are part of a nation."

"They cannot draw the sword as we shall do when the time is ripe. Women and children have to accept the lot men make for them. In these days if I were a woman I would marry a German. One short sharp struggle and—the world is in our hands."

At nineteen, as a rule, a girl takes little interest in politics and certainly forms no judgment of her own. Brenda believed what her father did. He hoped for an Anglo-German understanding and called the people who talked of the German menace scaremongers. He knew nothing of modern Germany except what he could glean from trade statistics and these revealed her growing commercial importance but not her threatening temper. When he went to Germany he dealt with customers who were extremely polite to him, and if he came across newspapers that abused England he said printers' ink was cheap and did not matter. He had hardly heard of Treitschke and Bernhardi and would have laughed if you had told him that the downfall of England was a settled policy with all Germans of Lothar's type and with those

leaders who could at any moment set Europe on fire.

"When your father left China he should have come to Berlin," Lothar said now, as if in sequence to what he had said before.

"Why?"

"In that case you would have been German. Now you call yourself German, but in reality you are English."

"I don't call myself German," said Brenda. She said it laughingly, but her cousin did not respond. He had a scowl on his face as he helped her out of the train, and was unpleasantly domineering and argumentative at lunch.

"I think he's horrid," said Thekla to her sister when they were in the nursery together adoring the babies. "He was quite rude to Jack about the size of our army."

"Do you call him ugly or handsome?"

"Ugly. Don't you?"

"I'm not sure. He's big and well set-up."

"He squints."

"Oh! No, Thekla, he doesn't. I've looked at him often to make sure."

"I do hope he is not going to marry you and take you to Germany."

"I've not the least intention of marrying him."

"He wouldn't ask you. He'd knock you down with a club and carry you off."

Brenda laughed, but on her way back thought of what her sister said with a thrill inexplicably compounded of attraction and dislike. Lothar did not propose to her. That would have eased the situation, for she would have refused him point blank. But he gave her no chance. His manner was both restrained and admiring: the manner of a man whose impulse is to speak and whose reason arrests him. He talked of his life in Berlin, and of his mother and sisters, who were, he said, extraordinarily efficient and attract-

ive. He called his mother *Mammachen,* which Brenda translated into Little Mamma, and thought sounded silly. But she took an interest in all he told her, and politely hoped that some day she would get to know her cousins Elsa and Mina.

"You must get to know Berlin," he said. "Berlin is *colossal.*"

"I like the little Rhenish towns," said Brenda, "and I love Heidelberg. I'm not sure that I should care for Berlin."

"It is a much finer city than London."

"Is it?"

"Of course it is. You have nothing like our *Sieges-Allee.* When I get back I will send you an album of views. The architecture of Berlin is the finest in the world."

By this time Brenda knew that her cousin used speech much as his primeval ancestors must have used clubs: not to agree with you but to knock you down. She had observed that he could not take contradiction peaceably from a man and did not expect it from a woman.

"Did you see all you wanted at Aldershot?" she asked.

"Not quite; but I saw enough. You are as hopelessly behind us in aviation as you are in everything else."

"Poor old England!"

"You may well say so. I am glad I do not belong to a decaying country."

"Did you think that Chatham and Portsmouth were decaying?" asked Brenda, for he had visited both places by himself.

"I saw a great deal that we should do differently. Of course we know that you have ships; but we also have them. In a few years we shall have as many as you. We have discipline, too."

Brenda did not argue with him. She knew nothing

about the comparative strength of navies or about their discipline. She thought that what England wanted was a few loud brass trumpets to blow in duet with these very resonant German ones, but on second thoughts she was glad England's voice was the organ one, not brazen, but self-searching and peaceful; perhaps, compared with the trumpet, sleepy. If England has to wake up she will, she said to herself, but she did not say so to Lothar. When they got back to St. John's Wood there was a taxi with luggage at the door and Jem Müller stood near it paying the driver. He came forward to greet his sister and cousin.

Brenda adored Jem, and the sight of him this evening rejoiced her more than usual. Even when they bickered they were in sympathy.

"You've been traveling in your old Burberry," she said to him, when he had spoken to Lothar and they were in the hall. "I shall burn it."

"You will not," said Jem, giving the parlormaid a conspicuously shabby coat to hang up for him.

"You look like a tramp."

Lothar's English did not carry him far enough to tell him what Brenda meant by a tramp, but he had decided at once that Jem's carriage showed the want of military training so evident everywhere in England. Jem was a plain likeness of his attractive sister, a tall, thin young man with hazel eyes, rather nondescript features, a quiet manner and a slight stoop. Undiscriminating people thought him mild, and in business that had proved an asset. When the firm wanted a difficult deal put through they entrusted it to the mild young junior partner and he was usually successful. He had just come back from Paris rather pleased with himself, as he had secured several new customers and effected sales that meant some solid thousands for Müller and Neumann.

"Well! How is business?" said Uncle Wilhelm

to him as they gathered near the library fire for a few minutes before going up to get ready for dinner.

"Not bad," said Jem.

"I'm surprised to hear it. Your methods are old-fashioned here and the hours you keep are scandalous. I am in my office every morning at nine. My clerks have to be there at eight. If you can no longer compete with us, you have only yourselves to blame."

"We do blame ourselves every day," said Jem. "You may have noticed it if you see our papers."

"I do not see your papers. Why should I? Our own are much better."

Jem did not laugh or argue or grow angry. He looked at his uncle and cousin with attention, and to his sister's surprise rather seriously.

"What are Pan-Germans?" she asked suddenly.

"We are Pan-Germans," answered Lothar; but he could not enlarge on his ideas because the gong sounded and Mrs. Müller shepherded them all upstairs. She did not think Pan-Germanism would be a harmonious subject for discussion, and she took the trouble to go into Brenda's room to tell her so.

"We have no violent bias," she said, "but they have."

"I suppose we have really," said Brenda. "I'm for St. George and England. So is Thekla. So are the boys."

"They are our guests. We will keep out of international discussions if we can."

"They don't discuss. They bray."

"Have you enjoyed yourself?"

"Yes. I was glad to get back and see old Jem. Thekla took a violent dislike to Lothar."

"How did he get on with Jack?"

"Oh! he boasted and Jack was polite. I wish one could teach him not to boast. People used to say that Americans did, but I have never met any who blew their trumpets like Germans."

"They used not to be so bad," said Mrs. Müller. "You have never heard your father boast, and I don't think I do."

"I think I shall tell Lothar that, as we all know Germany is the greatest power in the world with a monopoly of every virtue——"

"He doesn't strike me as a teachable man," said Mrs. Müller, "and he hasn't a spark of humor. However, they go back to Berlin on Saturday."

Mrs. Müller said this with a sigh of relief as she watched her daughter take off her outdoor clothes and slip into a thin *crêpe* dressing-gown. Everything about the girl was dainty and charming. Her room had been done up for her a year ago when she left school and she had chosen an ivory white paper, white paint and a soft blue carpet. The setting sun threw glowing lights on the ivory tiles of the grate and hearth. The window faced the garden and had gay fresh chintz curtains. The easy chairs were covered with the same chintz and there was a white silk eiderdown on the bed.

"It seems such a little while since you left school and we got these rooms ready for you," said Mrs. Müller, for Brenda had a sitting-room of her own on the same floor as this one. She guessed at what was in her mother's mind though she was too young to guess at the anxious tenderness in her heart. When her mother had gone she sat down to do her hair and discovered that her eyes were more brilliant and yet more dreamy than usual. What exactly these days meant and where they would lead her she hardly knew yet: but she supposed not to love and marriage. The idea of one without the other was inconceivable, and the idea of loving Lothar was grotesque. She wondered if any one loved him and whether he had ever wanted love? for instance from his mother. That took her back to his childhood when he must have been small and helpless like other children,

learning to walk and to speak. What an impossible picture of the big bony young man with eyes as hard as flints. Perhaps at the core there was a soft spot and the girl he wooed as his wife would find it. Brenda knew she had not; for, inexperienced as she was, she did not mistake the hungry admiration in his eyes and his proprietary air for the affection that leavens life in marriage.

"What he sees in me is skin-deep," she said, and ran downstairs at the sound of the second gong.

As they sat down to dinner, Mr. Müller asked his nephew if he had seen any English aëroplanes. Herr Erdmann inveighed against fools who thought they could fly, Jem talked of French airmen, and Mrs. Müller said she would like to see a Zeppelin.

"How many have you now?" she asked Lothar.

"I have not kept count," he said.

"But you really expect to travel in them."

"Of course we shall travel in them. We do not build them to look at."

His manner was always arrogant, but when he talked of Zeppelins it became insufferable. His pride in them and his hopes of them inflated him as gas inflates the bags by which they move, and he rode the air in fancy, conquering and merciless.

"Our future lies as much in the air as on the water," he said. "We rule the elements."

No one contradicted him. Mr. Müller's shrewd quiet face remained expressionless, Jem looked at his plate and Mrs. Müller changed the subject by asking her brother where he would like to go to-morrow.

"I am going to Kew Gardens," he said; "if there is time I shall also visit Hampton Court."

"Are you interested in gardens, Uncle Wilhelm?" asked Brenda.

"Naturally I am," he said. "Do you imagine that it is only in England that you have gardens? On the contrary. We grow everything much better

than you do. Your vegetables are miserable compared with ours."

"Have you a garden?"

"How can I have a garden on a flat?"

By this time Brenda was used to her uncle's sledge-hammer style and she did not mind it much. But opposite to her sat Jem, and she knew what the unusual calm of his manner meant. It had come over him soon after he met his relations from the Spree and grew profounder as dinner went on.

"What will you do to-morrow, Lothar?" said Mrs. Müller. "Is there anything left on your programme?"

"Had you a programme?" said Jem, looking up.

"He has been indefatigable—" said Mrs. Müller, "Chatham, Portsmouth, Aldershot, and London at night from somewhere near Blackheath. I suppose it is all connected with his military work."

"Yes," said Lothar, "it is all in the day's work."

His voice was harsh and decisive; Brenda, listening and watching Jem's face, thought of the little maps and sketches she had seen her cousin make. A week ago she had spoken of them lightly, but to-night she could not have done so, though she knew no more of their purpose now than she knew then. Perhaps it was Jem's face that disturbed her. He looked uneasy.

III

THE gardens at Hampton Court were glowing in the light of a warm September morning. The herbaceous border was at the height of its beauty. The wide lawns showed no signs of summer drought and the crowds that often disturb the peace and charm of the place were not present yet in any numbers. Mrs. Müller and Brenda had conducted their guests through the picture galleries and listened politely to Herr Erdmann's adverse opinion of Sir Godfrey Kneller's beauties. They had shown him the great vine and seen his disappointment at the size of the grapes. They had offered to go with him into the maze, and kept their tempers when he lost his at the suggestion that such follies could attract him. Now they were taking him to a seat in the shade because he said that the sun was giving him a headache, and that if he had known how little there was to see here he would not have come at all.

Unfortunately they could not go on to Kew just yet. The car needed one of those slight repairs that a car sometimes does need at an inconvenient moment, and Bailey had said he would be at the gates at one.

"Twelve o'clock," said Herr Erdmann, looking at his massive gold watch. "A whole hour still. Are we to sit here and twiddle our thumbs for a whole hour, Marie? Is there nothing that we can do?"

"Would you like a walk?" said Mrs. Müller.

"Certainly not. We shall have to walk till we drop at Kew, I suppose."

"You need not," said Brenda. "If you like, you can be wheeled about in a Bath chair."

"I should not like," said her uncle, glaring at her. "Thank God I have the use of my legs still. I can probably walk further than you."

"Shall we take a boat a little way up the river?" suggested Mrs. Müller.

"I do not want sunstroke, Marie. It would keep me in England, and after a fortnight I must say I cannot understand any good German feeling happy and at home here."

"I am sorry," began Mrs. Müller; but her brother stopped her with a waggle of his large hand.

"No discussion," he said. "Discussion makes my head ache. Besides, I do not take any interest in the opinion of a woman on questions of nationality. All women are alike. Either they are on bad terms with their men folk and range themselves on the opposite side, or they believe in them blindly and echo them like parrots. I would not have it otherwise. A woman's thoughts ought to be in the nursery and the kitchen."

Brenda felt so indignant that she walked a little away from her elders and sat down out of hearing. The long day still loomed ahead of her with its wrangles and its opportunities. She knew by this time that Lothar wanted to marry her and that his father was sourly opposing him. She would have been abnormally dense if she had not known it. Lothar did not hide his light or his love under a bushel; and Uncle Wilhelm did not hide his ill-temper. Her one desire was to avoid a definite proposal because she did not know her own mind. She had not long left school. Love had never even brushed her with its wings yet, while the idea of marriage only presented itself in disconnected bits beginning with amusement and adventure but leading as far as she could judge to a cul-de-sac. She could see no way out into the life

upon the heights with her cousin as her daily intimate companion, and at eighteen a girl of Brenda's temperament means to live upon the heights. Service, self-sacrifice, austere poverty might each or all take her there, but not the fatted calf with a man who thinks your first duty is to know how to cook it.

"Would you like to live in Germany?" Lothar asked her.

"I wonder whether it matters much where you live," said Brenda. "Sometimes I think it would be interesting to make the best of a dull place."

"Berlin is not dull. It is far gayer and more elegant than Paris now. London is dull. I have never seen a duller or a dirtier city."

"I was not thinking of Berlin. I was thinking of far-away little lonely places in India, for instance, where men spend their lives administering the law and looking after bridges and roads and such things."

"They will not be there much longer," said Lothar, laughing unpleasantly. "India is ripe for mutiny. The English do nothing but bleed the natives and swagger. They will soon be turned out. You may not know all these things, but we do."

Brenda at nineteen did not know much about the British Raj in India, but she knew better than to believe her cousin. By this time, too, she knew better than to contradict him, unless she had the nerve for a scene. His information about England was both pedantic and grotesque. She had never met anything quite so puzzling. He collected facts as industriously as a beaver builds a dam, but he seemed incapable of forming judgments. He could remember names and figures, but he could not see tendencies; and he was so busy despising the want of system he found everywhere that he forgot to ask himself whether a prosperous and powerful nation is not bound to have qualities a shrewd enemy will take care not to despise. Germany had made up its mind that England was

decadent, and like Herr Erdmann shook its fist and refused discussion. Only time could show whether Germany was right.

"Your parents ought to have educated the children in Germany," Lothar said suddenly.

"That was so like him," thought Brenda, "to tell her for the second time what her parents ought to have done with their children and to be quite sure that his opinion was the wise one. She was glad to see their chauffeur approaching to say that the car was ready; a good half-hour sooner than he had promised it.

The rest of the day was leaden. Uncle Wilhelm made himself peculiarly disagreeable at lunch because the food was not to his liking. He ate a great deal, but said repeatedly that it would disagree with him, and he described the ways in which it would disagree with such detail that Brenda felt uncomfortable.

"Your daughter is blushing because I talk of my stomach," he said to his sister peevishly. "That is English hypocrisy. She has a stomach herself, I suppose."

"But a blush is very becoming," said Lothar, fixing his monocle in his right eye and turning to his cousin.

His father gave a grunt and ordered coffee which, when it came, he said was not fit for pigs.

"I am glad we are going back to-morrow," he said a little later to his sister in Kew Gardens. "I would not answer for Lothar if he stayed here any longer. He has always been easily impressed."

"It takes two to make a marriage," said Mrs. Müller.

"Not at all. A girl of nineteen marries the man who sets his mind on her. What does such a young goose know?"

"Well . . . we need not meet trouble half way," said Mrs. Müller, who was finding it more and more

difficult to enjoy her brother's society as much as her regard for family ties told her she should.

Meanwhile the young people got over the ground more quickly than the old ones, and soon found themselves in a quiet part of the gardens where there was shade and an inviting seat. They had walked through most of the glass-houses and Lothar, who was not a gardener, said he had seen all he wanted to see.

"Kew is delightful, but very tiring," said Brenda.

Lothar assented vaguely and sat down beside his cousin. She attracted him strongly, although he disapproved of her ideas and ways. But in his opinion any girl of nineteen was as malleable as putty and he felt sure that if he married her he would be able to shape her to his mind. After all, her blood, like his own, was pure German, and in the ultimate qualities of brain and character it is blood that tells. Her manner and speech were English and so was her appearance, but her appearance pleased him. He would not wish that altered. When he thought of the wives and sisters of his brother officers he had to admit that none of them could compare with Brenda. Certainly most of them were very poor.

"Do you choose your own clothes?" he asked after one of those long silences that Brenda dreaded because they seemed too solemn to lead to anything but a declaration.

"Oh! Well, mother and I choose them together," said Brenda. "But I have an allowance now and my own bank account."

"How much does your father give you?"

"He gives me a hundred a year," said Brenda after a moment's hesitation that would have made most men feel embarrassed. But such delicate marks of resentment were lost on Lothar.

"A hundred a year for a girl's clothes! He must be a rich man."

"I get presents that help it out. Jem has brought

me two lovely evening gowns from Paris, and some furs. He really is extravagant, but then he spends nothing much and makes a great deal."

"I suppose a hundred a year for clothes is not necessary to your happiness," said Lothar. "Perhaps my sister Elsa spends as much, but her husband can afford it. I doubt whether Mina gets twenty, and she always looks correct and pleasing."

"How clever of her! I have not decided what is necessary to my happiness yet. I haven't thought much about it."

There was one thought in her mind about it that she would not put into words in case it sounded priggish. She looked along the years with the ardent hope and eagerness of youth, not for happiness, but for some chance of service. There was so much to do in the world and she had not found out yet what she could do best.

"I can tell you one thing that is necessary to every woman's happiness," said Lothar. "If you win that, the rest follows."

She did not respond as he expected. She neither blushed nor waited shyly for him to go on; and she looked impatient rather than enraptured.

"I want to do a bit of the world's work," she said.

"There is only one bit a woman can do, but it's highly important."

"There is no end to the work woman can do. Every day new avenues are opened, new interests are born."

"Every day boys and girls are born," said Lothar bluntly. "That is the beginning and the end for a woman. All the rest is nonsense. The world belongs to men."

In his mouth such an outlook sounded dreary and Brenda turned from it with aversion. She knew just as much and as little about the facts of life as other carefully bred girls of her age, and what she had inevitably seen of her sister's wedded bliss for years

past had given her a distaste for marriage. Poor Thekla had been more or less ill and incapacitated ever since she returned from her honeymoon; she had given up music and she did more sewing than reading. She adored her husband and children and was as happy as a bird. But in Brenda's jejune opinion the disabilities of such an existence outweighed its gains. At nineteen she wanted to spend herself on mankind and not on a husband and children.

"I think we ought to go back to the others," she said, getting up, and her cousin saw that he had blundered. But he did not understand how, so he blundered again.

"*Ach was!*" he cried. "You English are always shocked. One may not say that children are born in the world then! What a country! In Germany we are natural and honest."

"How glad you will be to get back there," she said.

"Of course I shall be glad. What do you mean?"

"Well! I mean that a German must be so uncomfortable in any country but his own, since other countries are so inferior."

"You ought to be as good a German as I am. Your parents are German."

"But their children are English."

"I blame your parents very much for that," said Lothar.

"It would be better manners not to tell me so," answered Brenda. She thought that would check him, but he hardly seemed to notice what she said.

"There is one way in which you could recover your nationality at once," he went on. "I will tell you how."

Some girls would have refused to see his meaning until he had expressed it still more plainly, but Brenda wanted to stave off a definite proposal. She had not made up her mind to accept him, and the thought of denying him outright filled her with actual terror.

He was so big and determined and self confident that she could imagine herself saying "Yes" when she wished to say "Nay"; which in theory was absurd. But theories are apt to fail you in moments of emergency and Brenda knew that her mother's presence would be a greater support to her than her own inward conviction that she could do as she chose. He would batter down her defenses if she stayed here much longer, twist something she said his own way, kiss her possibly and declare themselves betrothed.

"We really must go back," she said. "I know mother is tired. We said we would leave at four."

"You do not wish to listen to me?"

"We should not agree."

Whether he would have said more Brenda never knew, for as she spoke her mother and Uncle Wilhelm appeared. There was no further chance of intimate conversation just then, and she determined not to give Lothar another opportunity if she could help it. She had heard that a proposal of marriage was rather agreeable and thrilling, but she did not think this one would have been. An irrelevant foolish corner of her mind produced a memory of a big alligator at the Zoo that snapped is jaws when the keeper stirred it up with a stick. She felt sure that Lothar's mind was not pursuing fanciful images. He looked thunderously out of humor and his father noticed it.

"What is the matter?" he asked tactfully. "You seem upset. Has that tough steak given you indigestion or is it the hot sun? I had no idea that the sun could be so hot in England."

"Nothing is the matter and nothing has upset me," said Lothar with emphasis. "I am not easily upset. A man must be strong or he is not a man at all."

"My dear child, what had happened?" said Mrs. Müller, going into Brenda's room when the girl was

dressing for dinner. "I can stand one bear, but two . . . snarling at each other all the way home. . . ."

"Nothing happened," said Brenda. "He said he would tell me how I might become a German, and I said I was English. That seemed to annoy him. Then you came . . . thanks be!"

"I'm glad nothing has happened," said Mrs Müller. "I want to keep you at home a little longer, and if you do leave us I want you to go where you are welcome. My brother disapproves of marriage between cousins, and so do I."

"I thought he looked more like green rhubarb than usual," said Brenda. "It would not attract me to have him for a father-in-law."

Mrs. Müller tried to show disapproval but could not manage it and went away smiling to herself. She felt greatly relieved. At dinner the presence of Mr. Müller and Jem did something, but not much, to lighten an atmosphere that had become strained. The two guests were plainly at odds with the universe and contrived to find offense in every topic. Uncle Wilhelm asked Jem why he never came to Berlin to visit his mother's family, and when Jem answered civilly that he hoped to do so some day the old gentleman said he did not like to be made fun of by the younger generation and that he was sure Jem did not mean what he said.

"It is twenty years since any of you have been to Berlin," he said. "That does not show much family affection."

"We are always very busy," began Mrs. Müller, mistakenly.

"Busy!" roared Herr Erdmann. "How can you be busy? Every one in England is idle. The men work four days from ten till five, and then they take the week-end for golf and tennis. The women do nothing at all. I have seen it in your house. I have been here a fortnight and I have not once found you

or Brenda usefully employed. That is not the way my daughters have been brought up."

"Brenda and I were in Heidelberg this spring," said Mr. Müller, hoping to effect a diversion.

"Heidelberg is nix! If you want to know modern Germany you must come to Berlin. We have everything finer and better and larger than in London or Paris. We have architecture, statuary, museums, villas, drama, music, all in the highest taste."

"Any harbors like Portsmouth?" said Jem, who happened to know a good deal of geography and could have drawn a map of the German Empire with every little principality in the right place and the right size and shape.

"What do you mean?" shouted the old man, while his son shot a swift suspicious glance at Jem and then scowled at his plate. "Take an atlas and find Berlin if you can. You are not taught geography in your schools, I know. You learn nothing at all. A German navvy is better educated than an English gentleman."

"But, Wilhelm, how many English gentlemen do you know?" said Mrs. Müller, who seemed to be the only person at all inclined to wrestle with her brother.

"Quite as many as I wish," said Herr Erdmann, and changed the subject by refusing bread-sauce with his partridge and observing that such a mixture was only fit for an infant or a poultice.

"The proper thing to eat with partridge is *Sauerkraut,*" he declared.

"I like bread-sauce," said Brenda, taking some.

"Your palate is on a level with your brother's geographical knowledge, both beneath criticism. I speak plainly, and I see by the face you are making that you do not agree with me. When my daughters made faces, I boxed their ears."

"Don't be so excited, papa," admonished Lothar. "Brenda only said she liked bread-sauce."

"Ach was!" said the terrible old man and helped himself largely to chip potatoes.

"Why did you say that about Portsmouth?" Brenda asked Jem later in the evening.

"Why did he nose around there?" asked her brother. "What is he doing in England?"

"I thought he came to see us."

"Ach was!" said Jem.

IV

TWO years came and went without bringing any great external change to Brenda's life. She still lived with her parents in St. John's Wood, she had not married, she had not even fallen in love. Sometimes she thought rather disconsolately that she must be one of those celibate natures she had read about in some modern novels and that she would never be moved by the passion that makes the world go round. Sometimes she thought there must be something radically wrong with her and that possibly she was of a warped and petty nature, for as a matter of fact she enjoyed life without love enormously. In a thousand ways she enjoyed it. The seasons came, each bringing its own pleasures, the garden was more and more alluring as she learned to work in it, the blackbirds and thrushes sang in spring, the roses flowered in summer, in the autumn she journeyed to enchanting places, all through the winter she went out and about in London as she felt inclined. She had friends, money, music, a delightful home and the reflection in her mirror of a face and figure that grew in charm.

Her contemplative, rather serious nature would not have been satisfied with the pursuit of pleasure if she could have found work to do, but so far she had not. Philanthropy ought to have attracted her, she supposed, but after a few experiments she knew that she had no aptitude for it. Perhaps she met the wrong philanthropists: hard, self-advertising people who used charity as a ladder; or fussy frumpish ones who

looked askance at Brenda's pretty clothes. Perhaps the clothes were frivolous and perhaps her life was selfish, but every hour of it was full. She read a great deal, worked steadily at music, did little things in the house and was the beloved companion of her father and mother and Jem. They did not think her selfish. They adored her and indulged her, forestalling her wishes, getting daily pleasure from her youth and beauty. Jem had not married yet and was her best friend. Her other friend was Violet Lovel, and she was coming from Cornwall with her brother Andrew to stay with the Müllers for Brenda's birthday party.

Violet was a perfect darling. Brenda vouched for it, and vouched for it in Jem's hearing; for though no girl in the whole world could by any manner of means be good enough for Jem, he would probably marry some day, and it would be a tragedy if he married any one less of a darling than Violet. Of course if he never married and Brenda never married they would both lead happy quiet lives together, getting old without perceiving it and contented with a single blessedness that seemed to Brenda to give them all they wanted here below. She expressed these views to her mother a day or two before her birthday, although she knew that her mother would not agree with them.

"It is too soon to make plans for the future," said Mrs. Müller. "You are twenty-one and Jem is twenty-eight. Your lives are not shaped yet."

Brenda thought that it was not too soon and said so. She did not lead a cloistered life, she argued. She saw a great many people all the year round in London and abroad. She saw more men than most girls because a great many young Germans spending a year or two in England brought an introduction to Mr. Müller or were presented by friends, and were hospitably received by him. On several occasions she had caused a Teuton heart to flutter, but she had never once been able to respond. She had not exactly

liked Lothar, but he had made a more forcible impression on her than any of his countrymen. The typical wealthy young German from Berlin and Hamburg did not attract her. He was extremely well informed and self-assertive, unfriendly towards England, both gallant and clumsy in his manner, sometimes inclined to be quarrelsome and, compared with Jem, for instance, uncivilized.

"We are the most cultured nation in the world," one of them said one day, and exploded in childish wrath because Brenda laughed.

"But how can I help laughing?" she exclaimed, and for the first time since she had left school nearly giggled.

"Why should you laugh? What I say is true."

"It may be," conceded Brenda. "But if it was I don't believe you'd say so."

"Why should I not say what every child with us knows? Why should we be hypocrites because you are?"

He evidently thought his questions unanswerable since Brenda, still bubbling with laughter, made no attempt to answer them; and he there and then proved to her that in war and peace, in art and science, in trade and agriculture the Germans licked creation. He ended where the others ended by saying that he offended no canons of modesty by divulging these truths, since after all she herself was a German.

"I don't feel like one," she said, and thought of him the day before her birthday when Violet Lovel arrived with Andrew her brother. They were the kind of people her heart went out to, she said to herself. Their voices, their ways, their jokes, their silences were all what she could interpret and enjoy. She had not met Andrew Lovel before, and as he entered the room she saw that unlike Violet he was plain. They were both dark but his build was heavier and his manner less vivacious. They both had agreeable

educated voices that gave Brenda peculiar pleasure and they both seemed to think that the week they were to spend with the Müllers promised unparalleled chances of enjoyment.

"We've not been out of Cornwall since last summer," said Violet. "We're covered with blue mold."

"I don't see it," said Brenda.

"I've rubbed some off already, just driving here from Paddington in a taxi."

"We nearly collided with a motor-bus," said Andrew. "That woke us up a bit."

"It was heavenly," said Violet.

Mrs. Müller who was pouring out tea looked up in surprise, for though she was a woman of great merit she had a literal mind.

"If you lived where we do you'd be so glad to see a motor-bus that you wouldn't mind if it knocked you down," explained Violet.

"But I suppose it is very beautiful at Treva," said Brenda.

"Yes; it is," said Andrew, and his sister knew from his way that he was pleased and attracted. She was glad because she wanted a gay, harmonious week, but it never occurred to her to hatch matrimonial plans for her brother and her friend. She had often stayed with the Müllers, and she liked the whole family, but she regarded them as foreigners with some foreign ways and ideas. Brenda, for instance, knew German nearly as well as English and read deep, difficult German poetry that Violet could not follow even when it was translated. Then Brenda had a quite genuine distaste for some kinds of music that Violet enjoyed, and it was impossible to say beforehand which kind would rouse it. She liked rag-times and coon songs, although she herself played chiefly Beethoven and Bach. But Violet had seen her jarred and depressed by those sweet lyrics, "Come, listen to the Nightingale," and "Kiss me when I dream of

thee," and even by anglicized renderings of Schumann and Brahms.

"But they are German songs," Violet had argued.

"Not when Miss Bulstock sings them," Brenda had said with a little shudder. She was fastidious certainly, for the last time they met they had heard a Fräulein Koch sing them and then Brenda had shuddered, too.

"Miss Bulstock bellowed and this one pants," she said. "Can't you hear and see?"

Violet could not, and thought such trifles did not matter much. Music was an agreeable pastime when it was lively or sugary, but the kinds that Brenda liked were too stiff. She rather hoped that they were not going to be taken to the Queen's Hall this time because when you only had one week in London you wanted all the gayety and color you could get. Violet loved a revue or a musical comedy. She was a charming small brunette with twinkling eyes and coaxing ways. She looked smart although she spent next to nothing on her clothes: and she was undoubtedly civilized although she was undoubtedly ignorant: a puzzling British blend she had helped Brenda to understand. Two years ago, when Brenda had seen so much of her cousin Lothar, she had sometimes compared his encyclopedic information with Violet's all-round want of it, and wondered why knowledge did so little for the outer and the inner man. She had not solved the problem yet.

Andrew Lovel was living at home and helping an unmarried landowning uncle to look after his property. He had been to Rugby and to Cambridge, but as he grew up he did not develop any striking qualities that might have helped him to choose a career. At school he had been one of those solid trustworthy boys who never distinguish themselves either at work or play, but who are a useful element in a school, steadying it and in a dilemma choosing the right way

either by instinct or tradition. At Cambridge he had a happy uneventful history, and although he was always short of money left no debts. To his father, the Rector of Treva, he was a disappointment. The Lovels were badly off, but some day, if Major Lovel never married, Andrew would inherit a good deal of land and money from him. But any day he might marry, and then Andrew would be without a sixpence. This uncertainty about his future had made Andrew wish to go out into the world and fend for himself, but the trouble was that he had no desire for any career that his father considered suitable. He wanted to fend for himself in one of the colonies, or even, at a pinch, to go into business in London. The rector did not like the idea of the colonies. They were a long way off. The men out there drank and gambled, and Andrew was his only son. He did not like the idea of business either, because you could not succeed in business unless you tried to get the better of other people, and the rector hoped Andrew would never do that. Besides, business required capital, and he had none to give his son. He had hoped that Andrew would do brilliantly at school and college and enter high into the Civil Service. Fathers do mark out these easy lines for sons, without reflecting that they themselves have done nothing much and have probably not bequeathed remarkable brains to their offspring. However, the conversations at the Rectory concerning Andrew's career had all been conducted with good humor. The father and son were the best of friends, and when Major Lovel of Treva said that he would like his nephew to act as his agent and work on the estate with him, the prospect was so pleasing to Andrew that he accepted it. His uncle paid him a small salary, he lived at home, he was interested in his work and the only blot on his happiness was the occasional reflection that he was not taking a man's share in the rough and tumble of the world. He was not making

money, but as he had all he wanted, that did not matter much at present. He could not marry, but that did not seem to matter either, since he did not fall in love.

This was the first time he had been invited to the Müllers', and he had been invited as a dancing man to Brenda's birthday party. On the first evening the four young people went to the theater by themselves. Brenda talked to Andrew between the acts and Violet talkd to Jem. After the theater Jem took them to supper at the Carlton and Brenda knew by the end of the evening that Jem liked Andrew quite warmly; but she did not see the beginnings of a love affair between her brother and Violet. The two men were making plans for a day's fishing together on Saturday, and out of that grew another plan for which the young people from Cornwall had the authority of their elders. It was hoped at Treva, they said, that Violet and Jem would pay them a visit in June when the days were long and the sea warm enough for bathing.

As Brenda brushed her hair that night she tried to discover why some people made you feel that all was well with the world, while others made you feel that all was wrong. It had been a happy and harmonious evening even when little things went contrary as little things will. They had been five minutes late for the first act and that was usually enough to spoil Brenda's pleasure a good deal; there had been a sharp shower of rain as they came out of the theater, and at the Carlton they had had to wait for a table. But when you are with people who regard whatever happens as part of the fun you can bear with such slings and arrows as these.

"I do like good-humored people," Brenda said to her mother next day; and by that time she had promised to go into supper with Andrew Lovel and to give him two one-steps and an extra.

The dancing was to take place in a pavilion on the lawn, the best band in London was to play, refreshments and supper were to be served in the dining-room at little tables, and in other rooms elderly people could talk or play cards as they felt inclined. For it was an entertainment to which old and young had been invited. Brenda had wished it so and it was her party in honor of her twenty-first birthday. All day long presents were arriving for her, some quite small but some such as only rich people can give.

"It's like a wedding, only nicer," said Violet.

"Why is it nicer?" asked Mrs. Müller.

"You get such dull things at weddings. Knives and forks and spoons! Brenda has had more jewelry given her to-day than some women get in a lifetime. She is lucky!"

"Yes, I am lucky," said Brenda. The young people were sitting with Mrs. Müller in the library and Brenda's presents were all on view there.

"I suppose when you get married you don't think the spoons and forks are dull," said Andrew. "You can't set up house without them; I'm rather fond of nice silver."

Brenda colored and turned away, furious because the unbidden color had come. Yesterday at this hour she had not known Andrew Lovel and to-day when he spoke of people getting married she was fool enough to blush. A sheer accident of course without import or consequence, but yet tiresome. However, if he saw he made no sign. His manners were as charming as his voice and smile. She wondered why Violet had said that her brother was plain, and still more why on his arrival yesterday she had thought so herself.

He danced well, too. All through the evening Brenda danced happily, but with a touch of extra pleasure when the turn came to dance with Andrew.

He looked pleased, too, when he claimed her; and in various small ways he helped her to make the evening a success. She decided that he was an early Victorian man who encompassed a woman with sweet observances just because she was a woman; and as riddles of this kind always engaged her fancy she tried to discover why Lothar's attitude to women roused her anger while Andrew's did not. She supposed that one difference between the two men was in their view of service, for Lothar expected to receive it and Andrew to give it.

The people who came to the dance were of various nationalities, and in some ways their ways were not English ways. Mr. Müller's firm traded over half the world, and men came to him with credentials from many countries. Andrew and Violet had never been in such a cosmopolitan gathering, but Brenda was used to it. She spoke French as well as German and she could get on in Italian.

"Where did you learn all these languages?" asked Andrew. "Never at school."

"No; not at school," said Brenda. "I had French and German governesses. Languages are useful. Besides every fresh one you know gives you a literature."

"You could put all I know about literature into a percussion cap," said Andrew.

Following on this horrible confession, Jem's estimate of Andrew Lovel came as a surprise.

"I never met a man whose head was screwed on tighter," Jem said. "He knows a lot."

"What does he know?" asked Brenda.

"Everything that's any good."

"He doesn't seem to me nearly as well informed as Lothar."

"That's just what Lothar was . . . well informed. He always reminded me of a half-cooked pudding; full of good stuff and the result beastly."

"Jem! Didn't you like Lothar?"

"I should think not. Did you?"

"Sometimes I did. Sometimes I didn't."

"I didn't see anything in him to like," said Jem.

Brenda did not argue the point. She had not forgotten Lothar, but she felt pretty sure that he would never come into her life again. He had written a polite letter to his aunt two years ago, and since then they had only heard of him when Mrs. Müller heard from her brother at Christmas. He was still unmarried and had lately been promoted to the rank of Captain. That was about all Brenda knew of the man who for a short time had been so much attracted by her; and she sometimes wondered whether it was usual for men to be on the brink of marriage one day and ready to forget you cheerfully the next. If so, she thought their hearts must be of a peculiar texture, easily inflammable and easily calmed. She had not known till now that Jem positively disliked his German cousin.

"I wish you were going to stay longer," she said to Andrew Lovel, the night before Violet and he were to leave.

"So do I," said Andrew. "But in June you and Jem are coming to us."

"I have never been in the country in June," said Brenda.

It gave Andrew a little shock of surprise to hear her say so. They were in Brenda's sitting-room, waiting for the car which was to take the four young people to the theater. Both the room and the girl were exquisitely fresh and dainty and Andrew knew that the flowers in the room, the chintzes, the pretty carpet, the books, Brenda's gown and the becoming long fur coat waiting for her to slip on, all meant money. She was a lovely sheltered child of fortune who could never lead a life of comparative poverty. As he looked at her and her room he thought of the plain,

rather shabby rooms at home and of the narrow means that made their shabbiness inevitable.

"I'm wrong," said Brenda, speaking again before he did. "Two years ago I was in Heidelberg in June."

"I've never been out of England," said Andrew. "Don't you want to?"

"Rather. But I'm tied to Treva."

"Are you?" said Brenda. It seemed a narrow outlook and almost a pity that Andrew sat down to it.

"My work's there," he said.

"I want to see the world. Everything unknown tempts me."

"I've often wished I had brothers."

"So that you could have gone out into the world?" "Yes."

"That is what my father did. He went to China and made his way."

"That is what a man should do. Then he can marry and give his wife all she wants."

"I knew you were an early Victorian man," cried Brenda, her lips merry with laughter.

"What do you mean?"

"Your ideas. You want to give everything, not to take."

"But I was only thinking of things you buy with money."

"I know; and they are just what do not matter: and yet you make so much of them."

"Not for myself," began Andrew, and then stopped short because the others came into the room.

V

BRENDA knew very little about the Lovels. The brother and sister were candid but not communicative, and they imparted bare facts without the vital glosses. They were not well off, their father was a clergyman and Andrew acted as agent to an unmarried uncle who owned land. The uncle's property was called Treva, and the Rectory was close by. Both were near the sea, but the Rectory had the finest view. This was about all Brenda knew of her friend's home when she got out at Porthlew one afternoon in June. She had never paid a visit by herself before, and she had no experience of life in English country houses. The idea of staying in a rectory was rather alarming, but at any rate it was not to be expected that Violet and her friends would behave like the country-house people in up-to-date novels who loll about on divans, smoke cigarettes, drink whiskey and soda, and talk in epigrams. That, Brenda thought, would have been too depressing to bear; and she had made up her mind that if she found herself in a hall full of disagreeable women in tea-gowns she would run away. However, she could not picture Violet or Andrew amongst this particular breed of smart people, and when they met at her journey's end their friendly welcome set her at ease and she started in high spirits for a six-mile drive into the unknown.

It was market day in Porthlew, and it seemed to Brenda, as they ascended the main street, that every man and woman and child were known to her friends.

The people stood about in leisurely groups, the country 'buses were loaded with cases and packages, a band was playing and the sun was shining. Brenda looked about her interested and amused, while Andrew steered his pony skillfully through the crowd and Violet counted up the parcels she had still to collect from various places in town.

"Have you no shops near you?" said Brenda.

"These are the nearest," said Violet.

"But these are six miles away."

"Yes."

"Then what do you do if you want things suddenly?"

"Fetch them or do without."

Brenda meditated on the difficulties of housekeeping under such circumstances until they left the town and began to drive along an interminable country road, hilly and dusty and at first rather dull. The dust was mostly raised by large Jersey cars loaded with trippers, and there was less when the pony cart turned into a secondary road hedged on either side by ragged furze bushes out of flower. When Brenda could see over she saw bare low hills and cutivated fields and gray farm buildings. When the sun hid behind a bank of clouds the whole landscape turned leaden and depressing. But the air was singularly clear, and directly they reached the cross roads at Treva Cross Brenda saw the sea. By this time they were miles away from the environs of Porthlew and from its traffic. The lane in which they drove was full of foxgloves and from the fields there came the scent of clover and new-mown hay. The only trees to be seen were those surrounding Treva and hiding the house from view; and when the pony left the road it picked its way along a rough farm track that brought them with unexpected suddenness to the Rectory.

The house had been built about a hundred years ago, and was a plain solid one in the late Georgian style.

Its front faced the sea and was near enough to be drenched with the spray of winter storms. Behind the house there was a sheltered garden, but between the house and the sea the moor stretched to the rocks as nature left it, strewn with granite boulders and carpeted with heather and furze. To-night the sea was calm, a young moon rode the cloudless sky and fishing boats drifted slowly and smoothly westwards. On the horizon it was clear enough to see the smoke of liners homeward and outward bound.

By the time that Brenda had seen the Rector and Mrs. Lovel, and had been taken upstairs to the big plainly furnished guest-chamber appointed to her, she knew that she had come to a paradise. The landscape enfolded her and so did the house and the people. The note of austerity indoors and out was in tune with her own inner nature, inclined to duty and reflection. She did not mind plain food and worn carpets when the windows were magic casements and the inmates of the house as warmly kind as her hosts. Andrew took after his mother, Brenda had discovered. Mrs. Lovel, like her son, was plain, and Violet's cameo features were inherited from her father, whose silvery hair and chiseled profile ought to have procured him a bisphoric. He had not as simple a nature as his wife and son, Brenda thought, after half an hour's acquaintance, but he had a charming voice that he had bequeathed to both his children.

Violet came into the room as Brenda was unpacking her clothes, sat down on a window seat and began to chatter.

"You needn't think it's quiet here, though it is the depths of the country," she began. "When it blows you'll hear big seas booming all night, and when it's still you hear a murmur. There's a willow-warbler close by; and owls and night-jars come, too. They keep you awake at night, and in the morning the rooks caw and the gulls scream. I hope you'll like it."

"I'm sure I shall," said Brenda, kneeling beside Violet on the window seat and staring at the sea.

"I wonder you can bear to come away," she said soon.

"This house is only ours for my father's lifetime," said Violet. "If he died, my mother wouldn't have a roof to her head or a penny in her pocket. I've only known it just lately, and I want to go out and earn my living."

"But you have your brother."

"He doesn't earn enough to keep himself. Besides, a man wants to marry as a rule."

"My father has kept his mother and grandmother since he was quite a boy. He did not marry till he could afford it."

"That's what Andrew said when I spoke to him the other day. He can never marry, but he'll look after me. He doesn't want me to be a governess."

"I can understand that," said Brenda.

The two girls were intimate, but with reservations. They had never talked to each other much of family affairs, but that was because girls of their age are not usually told much by their elders. Brenda had not known till now that Violet's future was uncertain, and if she did not marry might be impoverished. Sometimes this spring she had thought that Jem cared for her friend, but as he had not spoken she supposed that she had been mistaken. Still there were other men in the world and Violet was distractingly pretty. Brenda herself derived great pleasure from watching her, but could not imagine her battling for her bread.

"I wish Jem could have come with me," she said when she had gone back to her unpacking. "He will have a bare week here as it is. He gets so little holiday."

"If only the weather lasts," said Violet.

It was impossible to judge from her manner whether Jem's arrival mattered to her or not; and it had been

impossible to judge from Andrew's manner whether he felt as peculiarly glad to see Brenda as she had been to see him again. She had noted what Violet said about it being impossible for him to marry, but thought she had heard of cases where this had been said and not fulfilled. She decided that evening, however, that his manner to his mother was just as attentive and devoted as it was to her. Brenda's own family atmosphere was harmonious, and she found the same pleasant traditions of courtesy and good-fellowship prevailing here. She enjoyed her first evening at the Rectory in a calm, rather disappointing way, and it was not till she leaned out of her bedroom window to listen to the waves that the stir in her heart found what it wanted. The stars, the fresh salt air and the rhythmic splash of a peaceful sea soothed her and promised her all that nature can promise happy youth, to-morrow and to-morrow.

She did not quite know what had disappointed her throughout the evening, for as far as she knew she did not love Andrew Lovel yet or desire him to love her. He was a dear, but poor, plain and without experience or what she considered education. He was young for his age and not as much master of his fate as a man should be. She wanted love to come to her in splendor and terror so that it was stronger than her and irresistible. Nevertheless, her thoughts ran on Andrew and she began to wonder what the unmarried uncle was like who seemed to hold the reins of his nephew's life in his hands; and whether a young man ought to run in harness just because it seemed convenient to do so. Next day she found that they were to have luncheon at Treva and spend the afternoon there.

"You have never told me much about your uncle?" she said to Violet. "Are you fond of him?"

"He's all right," said Violet, and that did not tell Brenda much. But when she sat at lunch next to

Major Lovel she understood that he might be a man who raised neither like nor dislike. He was dry and silent, rather alarmingly well informed where Brenda was ignorant, and without any knowledge of some things that she thought the salt of life. His manner to her was arid, but polite; and during lunch he talked mostly to Andrew about mowing-machines. He was quite unlike his brother, the Rector, and Brenda thought that he probably had better brains, the kind of brains that enjoys mowing-machines and despises small talk. He was a largely made man with a steady eye and a clean-shaven face. Once or twice Brenda thought that he felt impatient with his brother. His silence showed it and the dryness of his voice when he began again about mowing-machines. The Rector's voice was musical and his accent fastidiously articulate. Brenda could imagine his speech mimicked with success and she thought his arguments exposed him to derision, too. He wanted every sword in England turned into a plowshare, and feared that the new naval programme might annoy the Germans.

"Why do we not try to conciliate them?" he said. "They are the most intellectual and formidable people in Europe."

"What do you think about it?" said Major Lovel, bluntly and suddenly to Brenda. "You're German, aren't you?"

"No, I'm not," said Brenda with decision. "I was born in England."

"I was born in India, but I'm English."

"You'll never conciliate them," said Brenda, waiving her personal claims for the moment. "The more ships you build, the better."

"Hear, hear," said the Major, and returned to his mowing-machines. Mrs. Lovel did not talk much at all, and Violet tried in vain to end the debate on machines by interpolations of a calculated levity.

"Are we going to have tea on the rocks, Uncle Adam?" she asked.

"I thought you were staying on here," he said.

"Yes; but we can have tea on the rocks."

"I don't think so. I have tea in the library."

His tone was final, and in Brenda's ears rather bearish, but no one seemed ruffled. As he spoke he got up and opened the door into the library. From there Mrs. Lovel and the two girls went into the drawing-room in which there were folding-doors leading to a billiard-room. All the rooms were large and furnished by successive generations. They seemed to be full of treasures that Brenda longed to look at, and perhaps Mrs. Lovel guessed what was in the girl's mind, for when they had had coffee she showed her some of the things on view in this room and the next. The tapestry on the walls was Jacobean and some of the furniture was older still. There was a great deal of rare old china, too, and miniatures, frail silver, and in the billiard-room more family portraits. Some Brenda had looked at with interest in the dining-room, trying to see Major Lovel in a Georgian wig and a fine gold-laced coat such as the Lovel opposite her had worn when he sat for his portrait. A little later in the afternoon, when they all went into the garden, her impressions grew of an unbroken, unchanging order handing its traditions and its property from generation to generation. The great fir trees flanking the lawn were only a hundred years old, but the lawn itself had been a bowling green when the Armada sacked and burned the village of Guavas on the coast east of Treva, and in 1356 a Lovel of Treva had led a company of archers at Poictiers.

"What a beautiful place it is," said Brenda, as she listened to these stories told by one and another. "I did not know there was anything in England so beautiful."

"But what do I know of England?" she thought the moment she had spoken. "London and Cromer

and Scarborough. This is England. 'In a great pool a swan's nest.' Here you feel it."

They had left the garden proper now and were walking down a narrow path that led through a wood planted beneath the taller trees with hydrangeas. Beyond the wood they came to an apple orchard and then to the sheltered places beneath the cliff where Major Lovel grew fields of daffodils; and then to the waste lands at the edge of the sea. Bracken, furze and primroses grew amongst the short grass here and enormous boulders lay inland beyond the mightiest waves. The beach itself was all rock and cliff, with delicious clear pools in which Brenda found sea anemones and little crabs. The air was salt on her lips, the sun shone fiercely on her and the only sign of man outside their own party she saw on the horizon in the unfurled sails of a ship.

"I should like to build a hut on a shore like this and live in it for ever," she cried. They were threading their way over some rocks in single file now and Brenda thought that Violet was close behind. But when she turned her head she saw that Andrew had slipped into his sister's place and that they were some way ahead of the rest.

"I wish there was the smallest chance of your living here for ever," said Andrew.

He spoke less cheerfully than usual, for his outlook had never seemed so circumscribed and doubtful. Major Lovel paid him a hundred a year, and a man like Andrew does not ask a girl like Brenda to marry him on a hundred a year. Of any improvement in his prospects he saw no chance for years to come, when Brenda would have married some one else and nothing would matter. If his uncle remained a bachelor, he would own Treva some day. But Major Lovel was only fifty. The last owner of Treva had married at fifty-two, begotten Adam and the Rector and lived to be ninety. At that rate Andrew would be sixty-eight

when according to circumstances he did or did not inherit.

This train of thought was unusually depressing. Andrew never dwelt on his prospects because they were uncertain and remote and also because he hated the thought of waiting for dead men's shoes. He wished more than ever to-day that he had gone out into the world to seek his fortune. But the work he was doing had offered itself and his parents both did their best to make him take it.

"We are glad to keep you at home, my boy," the Rector had said genially, "there is no place like home": and at the time Andrew had agreed with him. Now the hour had come when he wanted ardently to make a home of his own and could not.

"I don't earn as much as a clerk," he said from the depths of his thoughts; and Brenda understood that this remark followed on his last one and was fraught with meaning. She did not answer it because she could not think of anything to say; but as they stood together on the higher reach of the cliff and looked out to sea she asked him if he liked his work.

"Yes; I like it," he said, "but it leads nowhere."

"You must talk to Jem," said Brenda. "He may have ideas."

"I have ideas myself. Uncle Adam has land in New Zealand, and I should like to go out there and run it for him. I believe I could make it pay. But I haven't persuaded him yet that it would be worth while. Of course it takes money and time to start anything now."

"But would you be better off out there?"

"Much better off. I should be a working partner in a paying business . . . I hope."

"But as far as your friends are concerned you might as well be in heaven," said Brenda.

It was a disjointed argument, interrupted by the arrival of the others and not resumed. During the

next few days Andrew was busy out of doors and hardly seen by his family till dinner-time. It turned hot suddenly, so hot that after dinner the three young people liked to stroll down to the shore and sit about on the rocks. Then Jem arrived and there were four young people to find the long warm evenings beguiling.

"I think you ought to accompany them, my dear," said the Rector anxiously.

"They've only gone to see the moonlight on the rocks," said Mrs. Lovel.

"They went to see it yesterday and will probably go again to-morrow."

"You cannot expect young people to stay indoors in weather like this; and I'm too rheumatic to scramble about the rocks with them. Besides, I should feel in their way."

"But that is my point, my dear. I think perhaps you ought to be in their way."

"Why?"

"For the sake of appearances. The maids must see them go out every evening if no one else does."

Mrs. Lovel knitted half a row before she spoke again, and then she only said that she liked Jem and Brenda Müller.

"So do I," said the Rector. "But I am not sure that I approve of them as friends for our children."

"Why not?"

"They seem to be wealthy people."

"I like wealthy people."

"But their idea of expenditure must be so different from our own."

"No doubt," said Mrs. Lovel dryly.

"I should not wish either of our children to marry for money. I disapprove of it."

"So do I," said Mrs. Lovel.

"It leads to great unhappiness."

"So does poverty."

The Rector's delicate face looked troubled. His wife

was very dear to him, but her occasional bluntness of speech was not. For the moment it seemed to turn life into a pilgrimage made with a small hard pea in his shoe.

"I have a great horror of being thought mercenary," he said.

Mrs. Lovel went on knitting.

"I am sure, my dear, that you agree with me," her husband persisted: so she had to answer him.

"We are not mercenary," she said. "We never have been and we never shall be. We could both have married for money and did not. We have been very happy together, but I'm anxious about the children. I want Violet to marry. I don't care what people think."

VI

DURING the next week the happiest person in the Rectory was Mrs. Lovel, because she saw what was coming and rejoiced greatly. Jem and Violet were like other undeclared lovers, moody and anxious one hour, exuberantly happy the next.

> Himmelhoch jauchzend
> Zum Tode betrübt
> Glücklich allein ist die Seele die liebt.

Brenda sang Clarchen's song one evening after dinner and she had scarcely finished when her brother and her friend slipped out of the room, their eyes rapturous. Brenda's eyes followed them wistfully, and she waited a little before she began another song. Night after night the four young people had watched the moonlight playing on the sea, but this night Andrew had sat down to a game of chess with his father and was absorbed in it. At any rate he did not look up from the board when the other two departed and he did not propose to follow them.

Brenda sang a song by Grieg next and then shut the piano. The room was a large one and she could talk to Mrs. Lovel in one corner of it without disturbing the chess-players in another. The two ladies sat near an open window through which Brenda could see the flower garden at the back of the house. She had some embroidery in her hands, but she hardly set a stitch. Her eyes looked at the garden and she listened to the tu-whit-tu-whoo of owls calling and answering

each other while she talked to Mrs. Lovel about those small affairs of the daily round that occupy the tongue even when the thoughts are elsewhere. Mrs. Lovel's heart went out to the girl as an older woman's will to youth that sees a rough furrow in front of it. There was no doubt in the mother's mind that Brenda and her son were strongly drawn to each other and that Andrew was holding back because he was poor. That was why he made excuses to stay out all day and now sat over his game of chess, while Brenda's eyes lost their laughter and stared at the garden without seeing it. Mrs. Lovel felt sorry for the girl, but not desperately sorry. Nobody could foresee yet what would happen if the two families became united by one marriage. A second might follow, and Mrs. Lovel thought that an interval between the two was desirable even at the price of a little heartache and uncertainty. The idea of both brother and sister going home engaged to her children offended her sense of propriety, since she knew that Andrew had no worldly goods to offer, while even the expenses of a daughter's wedding would be difficult for the Rector to meet.

Meanwhile the picture of the room and of the moonlit garden fixed themselves in Brenda's memory so that long afterwards when she thought of Treva she thought of the night when Andrew played chess with his father while she talked in undertones to Mrs. Lovel.

Although it was a warm June evening a small wood fire was burning and scented the air, fragrant also with the scent of flowers. The Rector's silvery head and chiseled features pleased Brenda to-night as the center of a scene in which the dominant notes were stability and peace. Andrew's pleasant voice, as refined as his father's and without any clerical twang, pulled at her heartstrings until suddenly and inexplicably she felt stifled by this guarded room which she had entered and from which she must soon go as a stranger. She got up, startling Mrs. Lovel, whose

thoughts had wandered from the storms of youth and their manifestations.

"I'm going out to find the others," she said, and was away before any one answered her.

She did not go far. She wanted to be by herself in the moonlight, enfolded by its beauty and sadness. All her life she had learned that man is born to trouble, but she herself had hardly known trouble. Her heart had never ached and felt sore till now. Why did Andrew change and chill towards her as he had done lately? Did he love her or not? and did she love him? Out here beneath the stars they might have come to a conclusion: but he stayed dryly indoors, moving his chessmen deliberately, intent on his game, allowing her to walk here alone. That showed he did not care as she did.

Jem and Violet were happier. They had found themselves out here in surroundings of peace and beauty that would remain with them as part of love's heritage for ever. She heard it in their voices, she saw it in their eyes the moment she met them.

"Where is Andrew?" said Jem.

"He is playing chess," said Brenda.

"How dull of him! Violet, shall we tell her?"

"You needn't tell me," said Brenda. "I know."

"How could you possibly know?" cried Jem, but no one answered him.

"Men are odd," said Brenda when she had kissed Violet warmly. "He has known you for years. He saw you for a whole week this spring. What made him speak just to-night? You must have known long ago that you wanted to marry Violet, didn't you, Jem?"

"But I didn't know that Violet would marry me," said Jem.

"Are you going to tell people at once?"

"I'm going to tell mother," said Violet. She looked beautiful to-night, Brenda perceived, when they went into the drawing-room again, beautiful and glowing

as if the flame of happiness lighted by Jem shone in her eyes and smile and even in the poise of her body, carrying her news like victory, with rejoicings. She went straight across the room to where her mother sat placidly sewing.

"Mother!" she said, and at her voice with its new vibration Mrs. Lovel looked up.

"I'm engaged to Jem," she went on, and her declaration must have reached the chess-players, for Andrew, in the act of moving his Queen, put her down and pushed back his chair. Jem, hearing what Violet said, went across the room to the Rector.

"I've asked Violet to marry me," he said, and there was a moment of suspense and general congratulation.

"I hope your father and mother will be pleased," said the Rector as if he doubted it; and next day he called Jem into his study and explained that he could not give his daughter a dowry or even make her an allowance.

"I might let her have twenty pounds a year for her clothes at present," he suggested, looking rather worried. "But if I were to die even that . . ."

Jem explained very gravely and politely that he had plenty of money himself and would some day inherit a great deal from his father. He did not ask for a penny with his wife.

"But what will your father and mother say?" asked the Rector again.

"They will be delighted," said Jem, and to judge by the telegram he received in answer to his news, they were.

So was Uncle Adam. He offered to pay all the expenses of Violet's wedding, and when he found that she was going back with Jem and Brenda to buy clothes he gave her a check for a hundred pounds. There were no obstacles, thought Brenda, and no criticisms. Every one concerned approved of the marriage and

wished the young couple happiness. Mrs. Müller did not think that a hundred pounds was enough to buy a trousseau, because she had some old-fashioned German ideas that ran into dozens and dozens of everything besides enough household linen for children and children's children. But she resigned herself to seeing her son buy furniture and linen that a correct German bride would have brought as her portion even if she had been in modest circumstances. She hoped that Violet would not be as unthrifty as her parents must have been, since they had apparently saved nothing for their daughter's marriage; and she hoped that Jem, who had been used to his mother's housekeeping all his life, would not be very uncomfortable with a wife who knew even less than Brenda did about catering and cooking. But Mrs. Müller kept these trifling qualms to herself and took real pleasure in helping the young people to set up their home. Jem took a house in Kensington Square, and while it was being painted and papered Violet came up to London again to choose furniture. They were to be married at the end of July and have a six weeks' holiday in Switzerland and at the Italian Lakes.

"I didn't think any one could be as happy as I am," Violet said one afternoon. This was about a week before her marriage, and she was standing with Brenda at a window in her own drawing-room waiting for Jem. The two girls had been looking at the new papers and paint, taking measurements and deciding important points about carpets and curtains.

"You are not sorry to give up the country?" said Brenda.

"Not a bit. I'd much rather live in London. I feel more alive here. Besides . . . what does it matter where one lives? I'd have gone to Patagonia if Jem had wanted me to. Wouldn't you? if you knew any one as nice as Jem?"

"I suppose I should," said Brenda. She was very

glad that Violet was so happy, but as she was human she wished that she could have been happy, too. She did not think there was any chance of it, and this made her feel sad when she should have been cheerful, and restless, although to the outside view she had all a girl can desire. She half dreaded her brother's wedding because it would bring her face to face with Andrew Lovel again, and yet she counted the hours till she saw him. She had made up her mind that if he chilled completely she would pull herself together and refuse to be heartbroken. She wanted to be happy, and one of the things on which happiness depends is a whole heart and a satisfied one.

"If I wanted to marry a poor man, what would happen?" she said to her mother one day.

"There are different kinds of poor men," said Mrs. Müller cautiously.

"I know. In some cases poverty is a reproach, but not in others. I shall never want to marry a waster. I detest weak men."

"We are all weak—in places," said Mrs. Müller. "No one is wholly strong. In marriage you must take good and bad together."

"I don't see anything bad in you and father."

"That is because you love us. It is the same in marriage. Love makes people tolerant."

"I don't want to be tolerant," cried Brenda. "I want to marry some one much better and stronger than I am myself, if I marry at all. Nothing matters in a man except strength."

"What is strength?" said Mrs. Müller.

Her matter-of-fact mind sometimes met her daughter's more subtle one and balked it in this way by a question Brenda could not answer; for the girl did not know yet what kind of strength she sought for in a mate or even whether she wanted it manifested in spirit or in muscle or in the romantic compound that men of flesh and blood so seldom realize.

"A man should be able to make his way," she said. "It would not matter about being poor if you knew he was working hard and would get on."

"There are men who work hard and never get on," said Mrs. Müller.

"I suppose Jack is poor," said Brenda, speaking of her brother-in-law, Major Wilmot. "But Thekla is very happy."

"Your father gave her ten thousand pounds when she married," said Mrs. Müller.

"Is father a millionaire then?"

"I cannot tell you what he has, but I am sure he is not a millionaire. Why do you ask?"

"I was just wondering. What does it cost to live? Do we spend more than a thousand a year here?"

"Much more."

"Some men are absurdly proud," said Brenda. "They will not marry a girl with money if they have none themselves."

"Quite right," said Mrs. Müller, who gave a shrewd guess at the girl's uncertain state of mind. She was not a mercenary woman and she liked what she had seen of Andrew Lovel, but she liked him all the better when she was more or less told that he was not the man to hang his hat in his wife's hall. For the rest she left developments to time and chance. In these days and in this country young people expect to manage their own affairs.

The Müllers were to stay with Major Lovel at Treva for Jem's wedding, and they went there the day before. Brenda did not see Andrew until he arrived with the party from the Rectory in time for dinner, and then other guests were in the room. He came up to her at once, but was soon carried off by his uncle to the lady he had to take in. Brenda's neighbors at dinner were an elderly colonel and a young Lovel who was a curate up country and was going to assist in the service to-morrow. He had not heard Brenda's name

when he was introduced, and he asked her if she thought mixed marriages ever turned out well.

"I suppose it depends on the mixture," said Brenda.

"If I had not known that the bridegroom was German, I should have taken him for English," said the curate, staring at Jem.

"He is English," said Brenda.

"But his parents are German. You can see it."

"Can you?"

"Yes. I don't like Germans. Do you?"

"I like some very much."

"Not really?"

"Yes; really."

"Perhaps you don't know many. I spent a fortnight in Dresden this spring."

"I was never in Dresden."

"Ah!" said the curate. "You must be in a country to know its people."

"But Dresden is a beautiful city, isn't it?"

"Beautiful! But I didn't feel at home there."

"Do you speak German?"

"Not a word."

"What was it that you disliked so much?"

"Well . . . I had quite a little adventure. They ran me in because they found me taking photographs; and they were most rude and unpleasant."

"I can imagine that," said Brenda.

"I told them I was a clergyman, and they said that only made it worse. They detained me for three days and then hustled me over the frontier. And they kept my camera. When I got home I wrote very severely to them. At any rate they know my opinion."

"I suppose in England any one may take a camera anywhere," said Brenda.

"I hope so," said the curate; and then Brenda had to turn to the elderly colonel, who asked her if she liked hunting. When he found that she had never been on a horse he seemed to wonder what she did

with her life and where she had been raised; and in a polite way he turned his back on her. So she did not enjoy herself overmuch, and when the men came into the drawing-room after dinner Andrew asked her if she had been bored.

"Did I look bored? I hope not," she cried, and she told him what the curate had said about mixed marriages and Germans.

Andrew said his cousin was known to be a silly ass, but otherwise harmless, and that his experiences as a suspected spy had given him the thrill of his life. He knew no more of Germans than he knew of Choctaws, and when he talked of mixed marriages he talked through his hat.

"Besides," said Andrew, "a man marries to please himself, not to please some fool of a cousin. What does it matter what people say?"

"It doesn't matter," agreed Brenda.

"Nothing matters except one's own conscience."

"But you may listen too much to conscience and become monkish," said Brenda. "I don't believe in that either. Generally what makes you happy is right."

"Oh! That's too easy," cried Andrew, but neither of them carried on the argument. They were glad to be near each other and hardly to talk at all. Andrew sat cleverly with his back to the rest of the room, so that he could worship Brenda with his eyes. She wore a gown he had never seen before to-night, and he thought, as he looked at it, that no other woman could have chosen it, or worn it with such charm. It was a picturesque gown, with a groundwork of soft blue and embroideries of silver. It clung to her with a sheath-like tightness, molding the lovely curves of her figure and giving value to the lights of golden red in her brown hair and to her hazel eyes. As they talked they watched an exodus from the room of all the guests, led by the Rector and Mrs. Lovel.

"We are going across to the Rectory to see the presents," some one said. "There will be such a crowd to-morrow."

"Shall we go, too?" said Andrew.

Brenda got up, but said something about a wrap. She went upstairs for it, and waited a moment to draw back her curtain and look out at the sea. There were lights on it and there were stars in the sky, a full summer moon, and in full view a rabbit nibbling on the lawn. When she got down she found Andrew waiting for her, and she told him about the rabbit. But it had gone when they reached the lawn. She wished they could go down to the shore as they used to when they were here before, but she would not propose it, and he went straight to the Rectory. Here they became part of the crowd, a merry talkative crowd giving its attention to silver spoons and teapots and to the bride and bridegroom who were going to use them.

"Jem has had more presents than I have," announced Violet. "They are all in London except this pearl necklace, which his great-grandmother sent him for me. Isn't it sweet, with that little square clasp that has his great-grandfather's hair in it. All Jem's German relations have sent him presents. Why didn't they come to the wedding? Father adores Germans. He says they are so gentle and honest and simple. Are your relations like that, Jem, or are they the new kind that rattle the saber and say the earth is theirs?"

"They are the new kind," said Brenda, answering for Jem, who hesitated.

"How amusin'," said Violet, and turned to some one who was admiring an old tea-caddy and asking its date.

Brenda perceived in her present surroundings, what she had perceived before amongst English people, their feeling of impregnable security, their imperturbable good-humor and their blindness to a menace that

ever since she had known the Erdmanns hung over her at times with sinister foreboding.

"It wouldn't be amusin' if Germany sprang at us," she said to Andrew; "it would be horrible. They are ready and we are not."

"Why should they spring at us?"

"I suppose they want what we have got."

"Nations don't make war in that way. They have to think of public opinion."

Brenda did not carry on the argument, because she could not convey her impression, derived largely from her uncle and cousin, that Germans care precious little for any opinion but their own. You might as well try to explain a prize fighter to a don as Germans like the Erdmanns to English people like the Rector of Treva and his friends. Besides, the occasion and the hour were unsuitable. The world these people lived in was a peaceful, prosperous one, a world of dignified traditions, highly civilized and urbane. She could not imagine it shaken by men like Uncle Wilhelm and Lothar.

"Still, your ancestors fought and died for their country," she said aloud. "The English are a warlike race."

"My great-grandfather was killed at Waterloo," said Andrew. "His portrait is in the dining-room at Treva."

Then, every one who was staying in Major Lovel's house bid good-night; and next day in the village church there was a country wedding with the church and churchyard crowded in a way that the Müllers, used to London weddings, had not foreseen. Indeed, the festivities seemed to them unending, for after the bride and bridegroom and most of the guests had departed there was a supper for the parishioners with toasts and speeches. These were not interesting in themselves, but they gave Brenda lights on the social position of a family that has owned a corner of Eng-

land for some hundreds of years. She also observed that in the opinion of the villagers Mr. Andrew was his uncle's heir. One of the tenants, floundering in the mazes of a congratulatory speech, hoped they would soon be drinking his health and dancing at his wedding.

"'Fraid he'll be disappointed," said Andrew in a low voice to a man next to him, and Brenda, standing just in front, heard him.

She went back to London regretful and depressed. If Andrew had not stolen her heart he had touched it and lived there for some time as the man she could have loved and married. When, in the autumn, she heard that he had gone to New Zealand, she asked Violet if he was likely to stay there for good.

"He might. For his sake I wish he would!"

"Why?"

"It gives him a chance. Over here his life is a blind alley."

"He liked his work."

"But it led to nothing. He had no outlook."

The two young women were sitting near the fire in Violet's drawing-room. Rose-colored curtains shut out the November weather, half drizzle, half fog. Tea had just come in and was waiting invitingly on two low tables. On the wall opposite Brenda there was a Cornish landscape by Lamorna Birch and it reminded Brenda of summer and Treva. The picture had been Uncle Adam's present to Jem, and always sent her fancy wandering westwards.

"Your father and mother will be lonely," she said.

"They have each other. If I found myself on a star with Jem, I shouldn't mind."

"Beastly selfish, isn't it?" she said after a moment's silence, during which Brenda did not speak.

"I wasn't thinking of that," said Brenda. "I was wondering about marriage. Must you bring such love, or does it follow?"

"It follows," said Violet with decision, "you needn't be afraid."

"But marriages are not all happy."

"So they say, I know. I've not come across many unhappy ones."

"Violet!" began Brenda rather hesitatingly. "Did you ever care for any one before you met Jem?"

"Rather!" said Violet. "I adored one of our curates, a fair young man with a weak chin and large eyes."

"Did he adore you?"

"He said so."

"What happened?"

"Nothing. We couldn't marry, so it just fizzled out—thanks be!"

"Why couldn't you marry?"

"No money."

"Were you very unhappy?"

"I thought so at the time, I suppose. Then some one else came along. None of them really mattered though."

"But at the time how do you know who matters and who does not?"

"There's Jem!" cried Violet, her whole body alert and her eyes shining as she went to meet her husband, whose voice in the hall his sister could just hear. So when a man mattered, it was like that. Your eyes were alight, your voice had a ring in it, you did not even hear what any one else said and you rushed off to meet him. Presently you came back with him and you both looked happier than the kingdoms of the world could make you if you possessed them in loneliness. But how were you to know?

VII

IT was early summer, but in Heidelberg the heat had been intense all day. After breakfast Brenda had gone to market and come back to the hotel with an armful of lilies of the valley and lilac and a blue and gray jar full of wild strawberries. The strawberries were sold in a cabbage leaf, so she had bought the jar to hold them and paid three-halfpence for it. She had come to Heidelberg a week ago with her father and was staying with him at the Prinz Carl, where blue and gray jars that cost three-halfpence each would not have appeared anywhere except in the back kitchens. But Brenda took hers upstairs, past an amused and smiling hall-porter, emptied it of strawberries, filled it with water, put in the white lilac and set it on the table in her bedroom: the table that stood in front of the sofa, covered with two table-covers, one of red chenille and one of lace.

That Germany was a wholly modern and progressive country, ahead of the rest of the world in every respect, had of course been dinned into Brenda's ears for years by every German she met and by every article appearing in English papers and reviews. So it always rejoiced her greatly when she went to Germany to find that progress had not swept away all the characteristic little ways and customs that belonged to her conception of her father's country, a conception in which fairy tales, piety, kindliness and a courageous poverty played leading parts. She always hoped the whole nation was not represented by the truculent

politics of their leaders, and when she came to Germany she always found so many contradictory currents, so much that was new and so much still delightfully old, that her opinion of its main tendencies formed and unformed itself every hour. She loved Heidelberg and the daily visits to her grandmamma and great-grandmamma. They still lived in the old-fashioned house with the untidy garden behind it, and they still pressed cakes and sweets on Brenda at odd times and took a deep interest in what she wore. Neither they nor their rooms had aged or altered since Brenda had paid them a visit four years ago; but they seemed to think that she was aging fast, and that by this time she ought to be engaged or married. They did not hint at their disappointment. They spoke of it broadly and hoped she was not too difficult to please. This time, too, they found fault with the plain tweed coat and skirt she wore every day when she went to visit them.

"We have asked Brenda what clothes she had brought with her, but we should also like to see them," said grandmamma.

"White!" said great-grandmamma. "When I was young I wore white in summer. Brenda is not too old for it yet, although to be sure I was married and the mother of three at her age."

"When I come to see you to-morrow I will wear white," said Brenda, who sat between the two old dames on an enormous Empire sofa covered with faded red brocade. "How old were you when you married, great-grandmamma?"

"I was seventeen, little heart, and my mother was married when she was fifteen. Her husband fought at Waterloo six weeks after the wedding. He was badly wounded and was never the same man again. She used to tell me about his sufferings and about her own."

Brenda loved that room and the two old ladies in it,

the stories they told her of bygone days, and their tender quaint ways with her and with each other.

"But Brenda ought to marry," one of them said to the other, coming back to the subject on their minds.

"Has your mother not told you so?" they said to her. "If you come back next year, I hope it will be with a husband."

This plain speaking amused the girl, but she found it difficult to parry. Why had she reached the mature age of twenty-two without any chance of marriage? Her father could give her a dowry and furnish a house for her; she was a good-looking girl and evidently healthy. The old ladies laid great stress on her being healthy.

"By this time you should be the mother of sons," said great-grandmamma. "Men children who would serve their country."

"But Brenda is English. Probably her sons would be English," said grandmamma.

"That has nothing to say," asserted great-grandmamma. "Blood is what counts, not birth. Let us pray that the *liebcr Gott* sends the child a good German."

"Have you ever been asked in marriage?" said grandmamma, who in all she did was thorough and methodical; and when she put her mind on a subject would not remove it again till she knew what she wanted.

"Oh! I suppose so," said Brenda, blushing. "I'll wear my best white gown when I come to-morrow, great-grandmamma. It came from Paris."

"If you were asked, why did you not accept?" persisted grandmamma. "Do you then wish to be an old maid?"

"I haven't made up my mind," said Brenda. "Do you like any color with a white gown, great-grandmamma?"

"Cornflowers," quavered great-grandmamma.

"With white a young girl should wear either rosebuds or cornflowers, and you may still be called a young girl although you have certainly left the budding age behind you."

"I have not seen any cornflowers yet," said Brenda. "Don't they come in August?"

"You can get beautiful imitation ones," said great-grandmamma.

"What was wrong with the young man?" said grandmamma.

It was such a difficult question to answer that Brenda began to laugh, and that vexed her grandmother. You see, there had been various young men of late years, some outspoken, some indeterminately amorous, but all hovering about the house in turn and all in turn discouraged. Brenda did not want to be captious, but somehow the men she happened to meet were well enough but never touched by the magic that changes liking into love. Except Andrew! and he had not spoken.

"He had no money, so he could not marry," she blurted out, because she saw that grandmamma was vexed, and it would not matter what she said here, far away from everything and every one belonging to home.

"In that case he should not have asked," said grandmamma decidedly. "A young man who first asks and then says he has no money is either a knave or a fool."

"But he didn't," cried Brenda, feeling that in spite of herself her heart was being pinned upon her sleeve. "Those who asked I sent away, and the one who was silent . . ."

The two old ladies looked at each other expressively. Then one of them stroked Brenda's hand, while the other ambled out of the room to watch their maid prepare the coffee. For in that nineteenth-century household there was no danger of getting the wishy-washy

tea and horrible cheap biscuits the modern German offers you in the afternoon, and Brenda had invited herself to coffee because, as she explained to her father, it was safer than going to see them between meals.

"We must eat and drink there, darling," she explained, "and I would rather have coffee and cakes at four than fruit tart with whipped cream the moment after ten courses at the hotel or just before supper."

"But you can always refuse," said Mr. Müller; "I do."

"Which I'd rather eat till I bust than hurt their feelings," said Brenda. "Grandmamma nearly wept yesterday because you left your chocolate cake on your plate. She said, 'Gustav no longer enjoys what I bake for him. His wife is from Berlin and he probably has a yearning for *Baumkuchen*!"

"Can't you tell them that a man of my age doesn't eat cakes much?" said Mr. Müller, and Brenda promised that she would put his case before them.

"I also," crooned great-grandmamma, when her daughter went out to the kitchen and she was left alone with Brenda, "I also loved before I married. I also ate my bread with tears. When I took your great-grandfather it was because my parents wished it; but love came later. Marry a man, my little dove, and trust to heaven."

Then grandmamma came in with a whole trayful of quite freshly baked cakes that she hoped her dear Gustav would find to his liking; and Brenda tried to explain that her father only ate bread and butter for tea at home, but found, as usual, that the old ladies could take no point of view except their own. In England, where no one knew how to bake, the poor man might be driven to the insipidity of bread and butter, but in his mother's house he should at least have the chance of something better. So here was sugar-cake strewn with cinnamon, and almond pyramids as luscious as new macaroons, and doughnuts

from the pan. With which now would Brenda begin, or, if she was not faint with hunger, should they wait till her father came? He had promised to be here punctually at four, and his mother had promised to have the doughnuts ready for him. When he was a boy she had frequently seen him eat a dozen.

There was a ring at the door, Mr. Müller's voice outside, another unknown louder voice, and then the arrival in the room of Brenda's father, unexpectedly followed by a magnificent gray-blue officer trailing his sword.

"I bring you my nephew, Captain Erdmann," said Mr. Müller.

The splendid apparition brought his heels together, made a profound bow in the direction of the ladies and murmured something about having the honor.

"Lothar!" cried Brenda in astonishment.

"My beautiful cousin!" said Lothar, bending deeply over her hand and kissing it.

"If I had met you by chance, I should not have known you," she said.

"I should have known you anywhere," said he gallantly.

But Brenda, as you know, had not seen her cousin in uniform before, and the difference it made amazed her. Every point he possessed, his fine carriage, his ramrod back, breadth of shoulder and general look of physical power were enhanced by what he wore, so that the perfection of his attire became part of him, and even supplied qualities that in civil kit had been wanting. To-day he looked distinguished, as well as big and strong; and his arrogance of voice and manner became the signs of a caste rather than the defects of an individual. The old ladies were childishly proud and happy to entertain him, and Brenda was not surprised when they served him with coffee before her. In fact, such is the force of environment on some natures that it seemed almost fitting. Was he not a

man and an officer, while she was merely a girl who ought to have been married years ago, but unhappily, in the idiom of the country, was still to be had?

"I thought you were always in Berlin," she said to her cousin.

"As a rule I am in Berlin," said he. "But just now I'm in Mannheim."

His eyes were fixed on Brenda with admiration. It was three years since they had met, and he saw that she was prettier than ever and extremely well dressed. Unlike the two old ladies, he could appreciate the perfection of her clothes and the quiet self-possession of her manner. She had taken off her coat, and he knew enough of such things to guess that her thin white blouse had probably cost as much as the two old ladies spent on two or three of their serviceable stuffy alpaca gowns maltreated by a local dressmaker. Her shoes and her gloves were highly correct, too, and her handkerchief was as thin as a cobweb. In short, here was a young female cousin to encourage and be proud of.

"You will come over to Mannheim, I hope?" he said to his uncle.

"We are coming on Saturday," said Brenda. "We have tickets for the opera."

"The opera!" cried Lothar. "But I want you to come and see me."

"Brenda wishes to hear *Die Meistersinger* for the hundredth time," said Mr. Müller. "With me what Brenda wishes is law, when we are on the *Bummel* together."

"I can understand that," said Lothar. "If my beautiful cousin smiles, you instantly wish to do her will."

"I have only heard *Die Meistersinger* five times," said Brenda. "Besides, father loves it just as much as I do."

"I have a brilliant idea," said Lothar. "Come to Mannheim for one of your English week-ends. On

Saturday we will meet at the opera and on Sunday you will be my guests. We will make an expedition."

"I should like that," said Brenda. "Where could we go?"

"I will arrange everything," said Lothar. "Will you have supper with me after the opera, Uncle Gustav? I shall be in the theater, too. Give me your tickets and I will exchange them so that we can sit together."

"When do you return to Mannheim?" said Mr. Müller, looking a little overwhelmed by the rapidity of these arrangements.

Lothar hesitated a moment before he answered. He was not obliged to be back on duty till next morning, but he had an engagement at Mannheim for to-night and had intended to leave Heidelberg in half an hour in order to fulfill it.

"We are going to drive up to the Schloss to-night and have supper there," said Brenda.

"I had thought of doing the same," said Lothar. "A colossal idea. It will be cool up there. I must just send a telegram and see about a carriage. You are staying at the Prinz Carl, you say. Then you will allow me to fetch you in an hour's time. We can have supper where my uncle pleases. But perhaps a little walk in the woods first . . ."

"I do not like being swallowed," Mr. Müller said rather irritably when his nephew had clattered out of the room. "My wife's nephew is very polite, but I prefer to make my own plans."

"Such a handsome man," murmured the old ladies, "so big, so straight, so gallant. What a *Bräutigam*! What a lover! How comes it that he is still a bachelor? Doubtless his heart is no longer his own."

"I don't see anything handsome about him," said Mr. Müller. "He has a big bony frame and I hate freckles on a red face!"

"He partook twice of my dough-cakes," said grand-

mamma. "How glad I am that I baked them. Perhaps he is not an Adonis, but he is highly refined. I saw that he took stock of Brenda's clothes, and I fear that he did not admire them. He is used to Berlin fashions, which, I am told, excel all others now."

"Run back quickly to the hotel, little love, and put on your best white gown, the one you promised to wear for us to-morrow," said great-grandmamma. "In that plain gray cloth you cannot do yourself justice."

"I think I will go back to the hotel, father," said Brenda, getting up. "We shall both want warm wraps to-night. It gets chilly driving."

"Are thy wife's relations well off, Gustav?" said his mother when Brenda had gone on.

"I believe so," he said. "Why do you ask?"

"Thy daughter is still very pretty and fresh," said great-grandmamma.

"Still! Bless me! Brenda is only twenty-two," said Mr. Müller.

"At her age thy father was four," said great-grandmamma. "I married at seventeen."

"Brenda must please herself," said Mr. Müller.

"Those are English ideas. I like them not. If Brenda's marriage is not your affair, whose is it?"

"Well! her own. Of course I want her to marry the right man if she marries at all. Her mother tells me she is difficult to please."

"That is a fault, and you should reason with her about it. My father boxed my ears when I hesitated and called me a silly goose. He knew what was good for me, he said. Time proved him right. Your grandfather was all a husband should be."

Mr. Müller felt rather depressed by these reminiscences and this advice, because he never had considered the marriage of his daughters his affair. It was a matter for themselves and their mother in the first place, and only came before him in the later stages

when the financial question had to be solved. At least Thekla's marriage had been arranged in this way, and he took for granted that in due time Brenda's would follow. He was in no hurry.

"I hope she will marry in England as her sister has done," he said, and then Lothar ruffled in again, and the two men went to the Prinz Carl together and found Brenda ready for them. She had not put on her white gown, but she looked uncommonly pretty in a blue one.

The gardens of the castle were crowded with parties of students and with townspeople, a military band was playing, waiters were rushing heatedly to and fro, and the clatter of voices drowned the softer strains of the music. Lothar's table attracted general attention, because there were not many officers present and because Brenda looked foreign and smart as well as enchantingly pretty. A party of corps students cast so many glances her way that Lothar began to take it amiss, and after returning their glances with a furious scowl suddenly pushed back his chair and half rose from it with every intention of picking up a quarrel.

"What's the matter?" said Mr. Müller, looking up from the Speise-karte in surprise. "Aren't you well?"

"Those gentlemen are annoying my cousin," said Lothar in a loud voice. "I wish to point out to them that, if they fix their eyes on her again, one of them will answer to me for it."

"What are they doing?" said Mr. Müller, who sat with his back to the offenders. He turned his head now and saw half a dozen fat-faced students, scarred and beefy, but apparently harmless.

Meanwhile Brenda had noticed that the young men were staring, but merely set them down as loutish and ill-mannered; so she got up, and before Lothar could interfere took a chair next to her father.

"Now they can only *fixir* the back of my head and you needn't worry about that," she said. "We want supper, not bloodshed."

"What do you mean?" he said haughtily.

"Weren't you going to run your sword through them? You looked like it."

"In Germany we allow no jests about such things," he said. "When the honor of the army makes it necessary we do them."

"I know you do," said Brenda. "That's why I've changed my seat. You needn't glower like that, Lothar. I will not have one of your bloodthirsty quarrels in my presence. I should hate it, and so would father."

"*Kalbscarbonade*," murmured Mr. Müller, "always *Kalbscarbonade*. *Wiener-Schnitzel* is better. Let us have *Rheinlachs* and then *Wiener-Schnitzel*. What will you drink, nephew? I like *Berncastler Doktor*."

"I want *Maitrank*," said Brenda. "When the moon is rising and you see the Neckar winding through the valley below you, and you think of Heine and storks and goblins you must certainly drink *Maitrank*."

"You may have it," said Mr. Müller. "I never think of storks and goblins and I hate sugary drinks."

"I also," said Lothar; "they are bad for the liver."

VIII

LOTHAR met them at the station next day, and as his tall figure strode towards them across the platform, admiring civilians seemed to make way for him much as people do at a party when royalties arrive. Brenda was conscious that all eyes followed her as she walked beside her cousin to the car he had waiting outside: a car lent him by a friend for to-day and to-morrow, he told her. It took them to the Pfalzer Hof, where he had engaged rooms for them and where she found in her own room an elaborate basket of roses and a large box of chocolates, both with her cousin's card attached. She thanked him for them when they met at the theater, where he had changed Mr. Müller's stalls for a box in the best part of the house. Then the prelude to the *Meistersinger* began and she leaned back to listen with rapturous attention. When it came to an end a younger man than Lothar entered the box and was introduced as Lieutenant Siebert. He had an attractive boyish face, and Brenda saw that he felt honored by being allowed to join Lothar's party and that he treated her cousin with deference as his elder and superior. She hoped she would be able to take a short holiday in Germany without succumbing to the magic exercised by uniforms, but she recognized that her present companions were putting a spell on her. Mr. Müller did not seem affected, but he was not so impressionable as his daughter, and had always regarded Lothar with dislike. When he got back to his hotel the other night

he had surprised Brenda by saying something that showed he had not been so deep in the Speise-karte as he seemed. He had known that Lothar was on the brink of provoking a quarrel with the students, and felt extremely angry with him for so nearly involving Brenda in a disagreeable scene. He would have cancelled all future engagements with him if he had pleased himself, but Brenda said that she wanted to hear *Die Meistersinger* and spend Sunday in the forest. She would tell Lothar that he must not be so touchy on her account.

"He'll be offended with you if you do. I know the breed," said Mr. Müller.

"But he can't run me through with his sword," said Brenda. "I'm not afraid of him."

She wore the white gown from Paris to-night and a row of pearls that her father had given her on her twenty-first birthday. When she appeared in the box every one in the theater looked at her and wondered who she could be. The officers on either side of her they knew, but no one knew her. She had beautiful eyes and hair and the English manner; she was elegant and self-composed; in fact, for a girl of her age rather serious looking. That was evidently her father in civil clothes and he looked English, too. Who were they? No one knew until the curtain went down on the first act, and then some one, meeting Lieutenant Siebert in the corridor, discovered that the father and daughter were from London and were called Müller. Of German origin then? The Lieutenant supposed so, since Captain Erdmann was the young lady's cousin.

Meanwhile Brenda looked at the audience and thought here, too, were signs of the old Germany, said in England to be pushed out of existence by the new one. On the whole, the women were as dowdy and the men as pot-bellied as (in the language of Treva) they belonged to be, no one wore evening-dress, and in the cheaper parts of the house she saw the tartan

blouses fastened with brooches from Pforzheim that rejoiced her because they were hideous and traditional . . . like pigtails and *Pumpernickel.* The singer who took the part of Hans Sachs was of a breadth she had never imagined possible except in caricature, and though his voice was fine his appearance spoilt her pleasure. But when she said so the little lieutenant looked as if he thought her blasphemous. Eva was a strapping wench with enormous hips and a tread like a grenadier; and the lieutenant said that as Gretchen she brought tears to his eyes.

"Do you think Gretchen weighed fourteen stone?" said Brenda, but she spoke so that only her father heard. She enjoyed the whole performance exceedingly, and when they entered the restaurant at which Lothar had ordered supper her eyes were full of the dreamy enjoyment that lifted her spirit. This was the best of all possible worlds in which such music could be easily heard and still echoed in the depths of your soul while you fed on nectar and ambrosia in gay surroundings.

"I do envy you," she said to the two young men; "any evening when you feel like it you can just walk across the street and hear such music as we have heard to-night."

"Not at all," said Lothar. "Nine times out of ten you would find they were playing rubbish. We have not had a Wagner night for weeks."

"There is first-rate music in London," said Mr. Müller.

"But it isn't just at the end of the road," said Brenda. "It isn't daily bread with us."

"*Gnädiges Fräulein* should live in Germany," said the little lieutenant, "then she would have music to her heart's content."

Lothar said nothing, but his eyes turned again and again to Brenda with brooding. He had ordered the kind of supper a girl is supposed to like, a mayonnaise

of lobster, then chicken, meringues, fruit and iced champagne; and he made a good host to-night, rather silent but attentive. Brenda had never liked him so much. In his own surroundings he seemed to have dignity and weight. The deference with which he was treated contrasted itself in her thoughts with the want of it he must have met in England, where he spoke with a foreign accent and wore shoddy civilian clothes. Perhaps it was natural that he should dislike England, considering the disadvantages under which he labored there. She had experienced nothing corresponding to it in Germany so far. Even the patent fact that she was English did not seem to prevent any one from looking at her with approval. She felt more conspicuously elegant and attractive in Mannheim than she had ever done in London, where her own appraisement of herself would have said that she could pass in a crowd.

"You have never been in England," she said to the little lieutenant, who had been comparing Paris and Berlin, greatly to the advantage of Berlin. "You don't know London?"

"No," he said, "I hope to go there some day."

He was a pleasant, guileless boy and spoke without any double meaning, but Lothar's laugh put a gloss on his words.

"I'm afraid that my cousin didn't like London," she said.

"On the contrary," said Lothar, "I like it so well that I am soon going there again."

"Are you? When and for how long?"

"That I cannot tell you. I am under orders."

"Have you ever been to England since you stayed with us?"

"I was there last summer, but not in London."

"Where were you?"

"Here and there. I traveled about," said Lothar, and changed the subject by filling up his glass with

champagne and drinking to his beautiful cousin.

Next day he and the little lieutenant brought the car to the hotel and took Mr. Müller and Brenda through part of the *Bergstrasse,* where Brenda again saw those aspects of Germany that she dearly loved. In two hours they were in the depths of the forest, far away from the life of towns and amongst such village scenes as she had read of in Auerbach's novels. A wedding procession on its way to church so thrilled her that she wanted to alight for lunch in the village where it had taken place and where there was evidently unusual life and stir. After speaking to a passer-by about it, Lothar said he had no objection, since the bride was an innkeeper's daughter and there would be a wedding dinner ready at her father's house.

"But will they attend to us when they are so busy?" said Brenda.

She doubted whether her cousin heard what she said. At any rate he did not answer, but stopped the car at the inn, clattered into the garden, chose the best table there and ordered dinner to be served at once. While they waited Brenda looked about her, interested and amused. The whole place seemed to be swarming with peasants in their best clothes, and the little lieutenant told her that some were guests and some had just come in a neighborly way to see the fun and do the host a good turn by eating and drinking at their own expense. The wedding feast was about to begin indoors, and through the open windows Brenda could see people assembling at a long narrow table. In the garden two sturdy tousled young women rushed to and fro with mugs of beer, bread and cheese, but nothing else arrived; and after waiting twenty minutes at an empty table Lothar grew impatient and hammered on it loudly.

First the waitress came and then the host, and then, as it seemed to Brenda, every one else. She felt ashamed of the commotion their party made, of Lo-

thar's brow-beating manner and of the humble terror he inspired. The more loudly he stormed the more anxious the people of the inn were to serve him, and though the world stood still for every one else the two officers and their friends got dinner in a trice. Even the bride helped, bringing a salad, and looking delighted when Lothar complimented her and promised to drink her health. Then she looked curiously at Brenda, and asked if she were married.

"No!" said Brenda.

"Not even betrothed?"

"No!"

"What a pity!" said the bride, and wishing them all a good appetite, retired to her own feast, which, the little lieutenant told Brenda, would last four or five hours. After the feast there would be dancing till three in the morning.

"How tired the bride will be!" said Brenda.

"She will go home with her husband after dinner," said Lothar, and his eyes sought his cousin's with brooding. There was hesitation in them, she felt, as if he was drawn to her, but doubted the wisdom of his own desires. She herself felt half interested, half afraid, but not particularly happy. If the great adventure of life was on its way, it came with some forbidding features that gave her pause. Her heart did not go out to Lothar as it had a year ago to Andrew Lovel. There was no divine unselfishness about her cousin, and she could not imagine him renouncing what he wanted from scruple. Probably he was a smart officer and had a career before him. He had been well hammered and was now ready to hammer other people. That was the impression he gave her.

After they had eaten they set forth again in the car for a point further on, where Lothar said a walk of about a mile would take them to a fine view on the top of a hill and a restaurant where they could get coffee.

"Is there a single hill in Germany without a restaur-

ant at the top?" said Brenda, when they alighted and began their walk.

"If you prefer it I will take you to one where there is none," said Lothar. "But then, as I am not a magician, we cannot have coffee."

"Do you know this neighborhood well, then?"

Lothar said he knew every path, because when he was a child the family used to come here for the summer holidays. At the top there was a large hotel as well as a restaurant, both open from June till September; as it was always crowded with Berliners you could spend a few weeks there very agreeably, being certain beforehand of good cooking, cheerful company and mountain air.

"When my sisters got older, they persuaded my father to go to Switzerland," he said. "I never liked that. In Switzerland it is practically impossible to avoid English people. Here you never see one."

"Why do you dislike us so much?" asked Brenda.

"I do not reckon you amongst them. If I did, I should have tact enough not to speak of them. You are German."

"I am not," said Brenda.

"You cannot help it."

"Yes, I can. It is your soul that makes you what you are, not the country where your parents were born. For that matter my father and mother are English, too, in all their ideas and sympathies."

"Then they are renegades."

"I don't agree with you. We take everything from England, her life, her laws, her safety. Our money is made there. Our home is there. She is our country, and any of us young ones would die for her if the need arose."

"But you love Germany," said Lothar.

"I love Heidelberg and this," said Brenda.

They had walked some way uphill by this time, but they had walked slowly and Mr. Müller with the little

lieutenant was well ahead. They were out of sight when Lothar, arriving at a point where there was a sign-post, took a narrow side-path instead of the main one.

"Is this right?" said Brenda doubtfully.

"Quite right; I shall show you the view, and then we shall join the others."

Sometimes Brenda wondered if the whole tenor of her life would have been different if she had insisted on following where her father had led; for the sign-post pointed along the main path and said that from here it was a quarter of an hour's walk to the restaurant. But it was an unsatisfactory subject for speculation, because it could never be settled one way or the other. She followed her cousin, and the further they went the more completely wood-magic cast its spell over them. Side by side, as the path grew broader, they walked beneath the golden shade of the great forest trees until the silence became charged with emotion and dangerous. It was not a forest with a dull bare carpet of pine needles, but one with an undergrowth of fern, bilberry, heather and wild flowers; while below the path the land shelved a little to a foaming stream tumbling headlong over boulders. Brenda, coming lately from London, took great joy in such a paradise, and her silence depended on her happy thoughts as well as on her electric consciousness of her cousin's presence. She gathered a little bouquet as she walked, but Lothar made no attempt to gather flowers with her. He stalked on, ominously quiet and self-centered, yet intent on her; for if she met his eyes she saw the same sombre fire in them that she had seen last night at the theater: a fire that both alarmed and compelled her.

"Shall we soon get to the top?" she said.

"Very soon. Are you tired?"

"Not the least. But I don't want the others to think we are lost."

"You need not be anxious. I told Siebert that we should come this way and he will tell your father."

Towards the top the trees were not as big or as dense as they were lower down, and the path itself became rougher, for it was not one used by the public and kept in good repair. At last it grew so steep and broken that it was not easy for Brenda to keep her foothold and she had to let Lothar give her a hand. The last step of all, over a rock, was so difficult that he had to help her from above with both hands, and as he pulled her into safety beside him he held her closely to him. His grip was like iron, but his face was pale and his voice had lost its usual harshness when he spoke.

"Little cousin!" he said. "I love you."

Brenda did not know what to say. She was out of breath because the steepness and difficulty of that last step had been considerable. She would have said it could not be done if Lothar had not stood inexorably above, taking for granted that when he held out his hands she would obediently seize them. It seemed to her that in the great issue he was doing just the same. He held out his hands, and she had only to put her own in them to be carried where he led. But did she want to be carried? Would she not rather walk on her own feet even if she stumbled?

"Little cousin!" he said again. "Why are you silent? I am asking you to be my bride—my bride and my wife."

"I'm trying to think," said Brenda.

"Kiss me instead," said Lothar, and, stooping down, he kissed her, not with an alarming violence, which would probably have settled the question against him, but with a deliberate restraint that she appreciated.

"I'm not in love with you," she said plainly.

"I am with you. That is the important point."

"Why?"

"A man should love before marriage. A woman loves after."

"I have heard that said. I am not sure that I believe it."

"You cannot know anything about it. You need not think about it. Let me think for you in this. Say 'Yes,' little cousin, and find out what it means to be loved."

In this supreme moment of decision Brenda, to her surprise, felt no strong call either to her cousin or away from him. He wanted her with every fibre of his body. She guessed that by his white face and passionate voice: which only moved her to perplexity. Perhaps, as he said, love would come to her with that mysterious fuller knowledge life brings to married women. He seemed content to trust to that.

"Is it 'Yes,' little cousin?" he asked again.

She looked round her at the heaven in the forest, at the afternoon lights slanting through the trees, and at the peat-colored stream dashing itself into foam over titanic rocks.

"This is Germany!" she cried. "I'm English and yet I adore Germany. I should like to live in an old gabled house that has low eaves and a stork's nest on the roof."

Lothar smiled, because in his ears what she said was rather indelicate. In Germany the stork brings the baby, and no well-conducted German girl would allude to this domestic bird at the moment of betrothal when the female mind is supposed to be in moonlight regions, unreal and rapturous.

"It is 'Yes,'" he cried in triumph, and this time there was less discretion in his kisses.

"Come," he said with decision. "We will seek your father and tell him. He will be pleased, I am sure."

Brenda was far from sure, and her silence led her cousin to expatiate on what he had said.

"There are many more women than men in the world," he pointed out. "Therefore it is always a

relief to a family when a daughter makes a good marriage. I promise you that your father will be satisfied with what I have to offer. I do not depend on my profession or even entirely on my father's allowance. I have an income of five thousand marks that an old aunt left me some years ago. But I am sure that money possesses no interest for my little bride except when she wishes to buy herself a new dress. She will be thinking of her bridal nest in Berlin henceforward, but not of the ways and means to line it. Business matters are best left to men, and I blame myself for mentioning them."

"I was not thinking of money," said Brenda. "I don't suppose my father will mind much if you are not well off. But he will not want me to go out of England. I wonder at myself for being able to do it. Suppose I am homesick?"

"I cannot suppose anything so absurd," said Lothar loftily. "In future, wherever I am will be your home."

"It has turned quite chilly," said Brenda, for a few steps had taken them to the top of the hill, from which, as Lothar had promised, there was a fine view of plain and forest. But the glory of the day had departed, the sunset was cloudy, and a little breeze was astir on these heights, threatening rain.

"We will walk quickly and you shall lean on my arm," said Lothar. "Then I shall know that if you stumble in the twilight made by the forest you will not fall."

Brenda took his arm, and found, as she expected, that to do so impeded her progress. She could have managed the well-kept level woodland path better by herself. However, it seemed to please him to give her a protection she did not need, and she supposed philosophically that the whole attitude of men to women is supported by such conventions. She knew that in Germany the conventional attitude was firmly preserved in all the relations of life, and that she would

probably have to submit to it in marriage. The idea was not altogether pleasing, for though she had a gentle nature she was used to think for herself and go her own way. Perhaps she would have to assert herself on occasion. She hoped not, for with a man of Lothar's temper contradiction would certainly lead to scenes; and Brenda knew herself well enough to know that she was a coward about scenes. She was not used to them and hated even a mild one.

The betrothed pair did not talk much as they made their way through the wood, and it crossed Brenda's mind whimsically that perhaps Lothar was repenting of what he had done; but when he spoke there was no sign of this.

"Little cousin!" he said as they came in sight of the restaurant. "Sweet little bride! I have a request to make. Speak not to Siebert of storks."

"Of storks!" echoed Brenda. "Why should I speak to Lieutenant Siebert of storks?"

"I know not. I only warn you that in Germany a young and modest bride does not allude to storks."

Then from the back of beyond in Brenda's memory came understanding and amusement. Instead of being covered with maidenly confusion she laughed—laughed at her bridegroom, Lothar.

"I'll remember," she said gayly, for if she felt vexed with herself and him she would not show it. Of course she understood. Storks are connected with babies, and in a world of convention you must not admit the existence of babies one moment, though you are considered unwomanly the next if you do not adore them.

"Have your sisters any children?" she asked, feeling that he was a little annoyed and wishing to placate him.

"My youngest sister, Mina, has four. On the last occasion the stork presented her with twins. In that household it was not an unmixed blessing."

"She is the one who married a professor."

"Yes. My sisters are older than I am, and I am sorry to say have both married civilians."

"Don't you like civilians?"

"I naturally prefer my own caste. But I realize that a nation must have civilians to carry on trade and do other work."

"Whom did your elder sister, Elsa, marry?"

Lothar hesitated a moment.

"When you come to Berlin you will have to know it," he said. "Elsa's husband is a Jew."

Brenda felt that the proper answer to his tone would have been "How dreadful!" but she did not make the proper answer.

"Don't you like Jews?" she said.

"I have no intercourse with them," Lothar said haughtily. "I am glad to say that there are none in my regiment."

"But I suppose you see your brother-in-law?"

"When it is necessary."

"You seem to be very exclusive in Berlin," said Brenda.

"We are," said Lothar.

IX

"I SHALL not ask your father for you now," Lothar murmured, as they got close to the restaurant. "I shall call on him to-morrow morning."

"But we are going back to Heidelberg by an early train," said Brenda.

"Can you not point out that a later one would be more convenient?"

"I should have to give a reason."

"I have no objection to that. He will be the less surprised when I appear."

It is most difficult for a person who is critical but not self-assertive to stand up to any one as certain of himself as Lothar. Brenda knew that in his own opinion the uniform he wore, his worldly possessions, and his personal efficiency made him a match any girl ought to accept with delight; and that practically every girl in his own country would indorse his view. He would appear, as he said, before her father, not as a suppliant, but as a bringer of good tidings, sure of his welcome.

"He may refuse," she said from the depths of her meditation. Lothar stood still.

"Refuse! Why should he refuse?" he cried with such thunderous anger in his voice that Brenda wished she had not roused it. "Am I perhaps not good enough?" and it seemed to Brenda that his hand went swiftly to his sword; but it was half dark and she might have been mistaken.

"He is wedded to England," she said pacifically.

"Then let him cleave to England. But you will be wedded to me. You have given me your word. A woman of our race does not go back from it."

He stalked on, emerging from the dusk of the woodland path into the sunset lights of the late summer afternoon; and Brenda walked beside him, no longer free. Her heart went out to her father with a warmth that under the circumstances was disquieting. A girl who has just promised herself in marriage ought not to be so extraordinarily glad to see her father unless there is a corresponding gladness in her soul about the future. But the future veiled itself when Brenda looked ahead. She saw nothing but the tall rigid figure of Lothar clothed in bluish gray, carrying a sword.

"I want to speak to you, father," she said when they got back to the hotel and were by themselves. "Come into my room. There is a comfortable chair there."

"Do you mind if I smoke?" said Mr. Müller, following her.

To his surprise and perturbation, instead of answering his question in a reasonable way, Brenda, after shutting the door, threw her arms round his neck and kissed him as if she had not seen him for several weeks; as if, for instance, he had just come back from a long business journey when a man expects his women folk to receive him with a little extra warmth and his *Liebspiese* for dinner.

"What is it then, Brenda?" he said, disengaging himself. "What is it, my child?"

"Oh! Father, I'm going to be married," cried Brenda.

Mr. Müller looked neither surprised nor pleased, but unusually serious; and he didn't speak.

"You guess who it is," said Brenda.

"Naturally I guess," said Mr. Müller. "I cannot suppose that you are going to marry the little lieu-

tenant, although of the two men we have been with to-day I greatly prefer him."

"You don't like Lothar?"

"I am sure that he is a good officer."

"That means certain valuable qualities."

"Undoubtedly."

Brenda, who was still standing beside her father, gave a little sigh.

"Grandmamma and great-grandmamma will be delighted," she pointed out. "They consider him a sort of Olympian god."

"I wish your mother was here," said Mr. Müller. "I have always thought a great deal of her opinion."

"But, father! There is nothing against Lothar, is there?"

"Nothing whatever! He has some money and a sufficiently good position. Your sister married a poorer man."

He waited a little, weighing his words; and then he added: "But I was better pleased."

"He is coming to see you to-morrow morning," said Brenda. "He wants us to take a later train so that you can receive him."

"Why can't he come to Heidelberg to see me?"

"He is tied here most of the week. He works very hard."

"Then let him wait till he is not tied. What is he doing here in Baden? His regiment is in Berlin, isn't it? What was he doing in England last summer? Why didn't he come to see us?"

"He is not a man who talks about his work," said Brenda. "You know that officers are seconded sometimes and sent on this and that errand. You know that Jack was sent to Germany last year and Dendy has been to India."

"Well . . . I don't see why we should alter our plans. There is no hurry, is there?"

"I suppose he thinks there is."

In the end the young people had their way. Mr. Müller agreed to take an afternoon train back to Heidelberg and to see Lothar when he came at midday to make his formal offer of marriage. He spent an anxious hour before his nephew arrived, because he did not want Brenda to marry this man and knew of no way to prevent it. From a worldly point of view the alliance was suitable, and none of his reasons against it were of the kind that are valuable in argument. However, he resolved to do his best with one or two of them. He could not speak his mind. He could not say to Lothar, "I consider you an arrogant, hostile alien, with truculent manners and a bad temper, and I wish my daughter would not marry you." That is no doubt what he felt, but he felt it inexpressively, as rather simple-minded men do feel what is wrong with others. His objection to Lothar was not founded on what he called facts, because in his opinion you must be able to touch a fact or at any rate produce it in a court of law. Unfortunately, Lothar's facts were not all of this patent kind.

"Brenda has told you of my errand," he said, as he sat down opposite Mr. Müller and observed that he looked glum.

"Yes. She has told me," said Mr. Müller. "It is a matter about which I should like to consult my wife."

Lothar stared in surprise.

"I have come here to ask you for the hand of your daughter," he said stiffly. "I am in a position to marry. I have a private income of £250 a year, besides an allowance from my father, and when my parents die I shall have a great deal more. My position in the army will give my wife a better position socially than any marriage in the commercial or professional world could do. We shall live in Berlin, the most agreeable and cultured capital in Europe. I cannot imagine on what subject you require your

wife's advice. Brenda and I understand each other, and there are no material obstacles in the way of our happiness."

"Have you reflected that, if you marry Brenda, you marry an Englishwoman?" said Mr. Müller.

"When she marries she will be a German. A woman takes her husband's nationality. Besides, if blood counts, she is German now."

"I should say that she is English with every breath of her body. All my children are."

"Yet she is called Müller."

"The English Ambassador is called Goschen. The Austrian Ambassador is Bunsen. England makes many men her own."

"Can you explain it?"

"It would take a long time," said Mr. Müller, and did not begin. His thoughts just then were fixed on his responsibility to his child and his fears for her happiness.

"I suppose Brenda will bring something to the exchequer," said Lothar, breaking in on the older man's reverie. "You will give her a dowry?"

"Brenda will have ten thousand pounds. That is what I give each child at marriage. It is put into settlement in the English way."

"In Germany the income is paid to the husband," said Lothar.

"Thekla's income is paid to her," said Mr. Müller.

"But a system of that kind might lead to dissension between a husband and wife. I do not approve of it."

"Then marry a German," said Mr. Müller.

Lothar felt that his reception was not what his deserts led him to expect, and his manner became less conciliatory.

"Brenda said you would not rejoice over my proposal," he said; "she did not explain why. Nor do you. I suppose you wish your daughter to marry?"

"If it is for her happiness."

"She will be happy with me. Why not?"

In Mr. Müller's opinion the young man's tone was offensively condescending and superior. He knew that from Lothar's point of view his own civil calling and civil clothes placed him at an enormous disadvantage, but as he did not share his nephew's point of view he felt exasperated.

"I have told you why not as well as I can," he said. "If Brenda really wishes to marry you, I shall not refuse my consent; but I shall give it unwillingly. I would rather keep her in England."

"I should like to see Brenda," replied Lothar. "She gave me her word yesterday. I shall hold her to it if I can."

"Why are you so anxious to marry her?"

"I am passionately in love with her," said Lothar.

That crude inquiry and that elemental confession seemed to clear the air. From the young man's armor of conceit and pride there peeped a human quality that might regenerate him. If Brenda loved him, perhaps she might both bear with him and improve him. Mr. Müller, having no valid objections to bring forward, felt driven to yield. This pretender to the hand of his child was sober, prosperous, of good report, sound in mind and body, and presumably agreeable to her. What could a beleaguered father do but give his blessing to a union he nevertheless distrusted and disliked?

"If Brenda insists on keeping her word she shall do it," he said slowly. "But if she has changed her mind she shall go free. I will find out if she wishes to see you, but I shall tell her to do exactly as she pleases."

He went out of the room and found Brenda upstairs, contemplating an arrangement in red and white roses of two large intertwined hearts which had just been sent to her from a florist's shop accompanied by

Lothar's card. Mr. Müller looked at the flowers and then at his daughter.

"He wishes to see you," he said.

"Have you settled anything?"

"I have settled that you are to do as you please. If you regret having given him your promise, you must say so without fear, in my presence. I am not going to have you bullied into marrying him."

"I don't think he has deserved that," said Brenda. "I believe he is in love with me."

"I believe that, too, but love is not always enough."

"I thought it was."

"Well . . . there are different kinds. Besides, some last and some don't. There is a good deal of wear and tear even in a happy marriage."

"You and mother don't wear and tear each other."

"I wish your mother was here," said Mr. Müller.

"I'll see Lothar," said Brenda, and went down to her cousin by herself.

The result was what might have been expected. Two agitated young people appeared before him half an hour later and told him that they had decided finally to take each other for better, for worse. Lothar was so patently in love and in such a good humor that he made a better impression on Mr. Müller than he had ever done before, and Brenda assured her father in an aside that she would find her happiness in making a man who adored her happy. There was not much time for doubts or further discussion. Lothar gave them a sybarite lunch and after lunch took Brenda to a jeweler's, where he bought her two rings, one of plain gold and one set with diamonds.

"With the gold one I shall wed thee, dearest heart," he whispered. "I know that in England you will wear the diamond one as the sign of our betrothal."

It was when Brenda got back to Heidelberg that afternoon that the full glory of her position became plain to her. Grandmamma and great-grandmamma

rejoiced over her as if her news opened the gates of Paradise. They were moved to tears and then to laughter and then to tears again. They admired the diamond ring, but they did not approve of it as an emblem. They wanted Brenda to wear the plain gold one on her left hand till her wedding-day, when her bridegroom with the benediction of the Church would transfer it to the right, the proper place for a legitimately married wife to wear it. They wished Brenda could be married in Heidelberg, so that her man could meet her at the altar in his uniform; though they hastened to add that even in civil clothes Lothar would always cut a fine figure. How fortunate that Brenda had come to Germany and met her cousin again. What pleasure the news would give her mother! They were surprised to hear that Mr. Müller had not telegraphed, but was going to write. Such deliberation seemed cold-blooded. They implored Brenda to stay on in Heidelberg, get her bridegroom to come over again and be entertained together by those wreaths and poems and feastings that a betrothed pair in Germany expects of its family and friends. But Mr. Müller could not wait on in Heidelberg and did not dream of leaving Brenda behind him. He had to be back in London, he said, and his wife would be anxious to see her daughter after getting the news.

"But when will the happy bride become a happy wife?" asked grandmamma. "It is a pity that she must pass her bride-time so far from her beloved, and in a foreign land."

"When two hearts have found each other distance matters not," said great-grandmamma. "Put no thoughts of sadness into the child's head, Bertha. He has chosen her. How can she be sad knowing that she is his bride? The time will pass quickly till he goes to claim her, for she must be busy with her needle from morning till night. Even if her mother

has stores of linen ready for her, there will be the wedding-gown to make and perhaps the veil to embroider."

"I should like to give Brenda the big tablecloth and the twenty-four napkins belonging to it for which you spun the thread before your own wedding," said grandmamma. "They are as good as new and we never use them. Brenda can embroider her own initials after yours and mine on them."

"I should also like to give Brenda the lace that I wore on my wedding-day," said great-grandmamma. "My father bought it for my mother in Brussels after the battle of Waterloo."

Dear grandmamma and great-grandmamma! Brenda bid them good-bye with tender affection and regret, and wondered whether it was just the lapse of years that separated her from them. Their sentiments were so simple, their claims on life so small, and their virtuous days so contented. She was too modern to follow them and too thoughtful to call their lives empty; for how can lives be empty that are filled to overflowing with happiness and affection? Brenda had not made up her mind about the great problems of life with all the assurance usual to her years, but she was inclined to think that the Blue Bird cannot be bought or bullied or deceived. It comes, it goes, it eludes, it loves the rich as well as the humble, it only flutters near some natures too complex to hold it fast. She had hitherto been happy, she supposed, in a quiet everyday fashion, but was she going to be henceforward? She did not find that looking at her golden ring reassured her as completely as it did the bride in the poem, but she tried to believe that her doubts and fears were common to girls who have been snatched aloft as if by a whirlwind and then set down in the flats of life again until it is time for the whirlwind to reappear.

Mrs. Müller received her daughter with affectionate

sympathy, and said nothing to show that she disapproved of her engagement to Lothar. She evidently expected Uncle Wilhelm to raise difficulties, but when letters from Berlin arrived they were not as disagreeable as they might have been. Herr Erdmann said that his son was old enough to know his own mind, and that if he chose to marry a foreigner no one could prevent it. He even admitted that Lothar might have made a worse choice, as at any rate Brenda had been brought up by a German mother and must be expected to possess some of the virtues the women of his race monopolized. He proposed to come over with his wife for the wedding, and promised to present the young couple with the silver spoons and forks necessary to their comfort. His wife wrote, too, and hoped that when Brenda ordered her trousseau she would remember where her future home would be, and not fill her trunks with *décolletée* dresses she could never wear. Berlin was now the most elegant and luxurious city in the world, but it would never throw back to the ridiculous English fashion of putting on a ball costume in order to eat sausage and salad for supper. Frau Erdmann also took for granted that Lothar had come to some agreement with his uncle about the furniture. The household linen Brenda would, of course, bring with her, for, lost to Germany as the family was, it must still be known to them that wherever the German eagle spreads its wings the bride provides the linen.

"Did Lothar come to an agreement with you about the furniture?" asked Brenda, rather depressed by the tone of both letters.

"No," said Mr. Müller, "but I shall not haggle with them. In Germany the bride usually furnishes the house and always provides the linen."

"But what happens when the man has money and the girl has none?"

"The marriage doesn't happen as a rule."

"They don't seem over-pleased about Lothar and me," said Brenda. "I suppose they wanted him to marry a German."

"No doubt," said Mr. Müller.

"You must become as German as you can," said Mrs. Müller.

"But I should like to make my house as English as possible," said Brenda. "Can I get my furniture here?"

It was settled that she could and she wrote to tell Lothar that she was choosing everything for their future home in London and that she wished he could come over and help her. He answered rather unamiably that in his opinion furniture could be bought better in Berlin than in London, as all the newest and most artistic designs were to be found there; but that if Brenda, whose father was paying for the stuff, wished to buy articles lacking in taste and novelty she must choose them without him. He would only get four weeks' leave, and did not dream of wasting any of it in furniture shops. He proposed to arrive two days before the marriage, and hoped to find everything would be in order for the civil ceremony, which in his opinion was more important than the theatrical religious one to which women attached weight. Brenda did not show this letter to anybody, but she went about the business of choosing her furniture with a subdued air that Violet who usually went with her, noticed.

"She doesn't feel a bit as I did when I married you," she said to Jem. "She isn't bubbling over with joy and excitement."

"I can't think what possesses her to do it," said Jem, who had heard of his sister's engagement with amazement and thought of her marriage with concern.

"I believe she is in love with an idea," said Violet, "a childish romantic idea of Germany. She always has been. She sees it as a country of moonshine and

fairy tales and adorable simplicity. Brenda is a darling, you know, Jem; but she hasn't cut her wisdom teeth yet. Why didn't she marry Andrew?"

"Did he ask her?"

"I've no idea. He may have thought that as he had no money . . ."

"But were they in love with each other?"

"Yes. They were."

"How do you know?"

"I knew that night when Brenda came out into the garden to meet us. Any one not blind as a bat could see. Mother saw plainly."

"Then why is Andrew such a silly ass? Why did he go to New Zealand?"

"How could he marry, Jem, on an uncertain hundred a year? He was quite right, and yet I wish . . ."

"So do I," said Jem; "I've no faith in this fellow."

"I've not even seen his photograph, and Brenda tells me nothing. What kind is he?"

"A kind I can't stick," said Jem with that inability to give reasons for his likes and dislikes that simplifies and blights discussion.

Brenda tried not to think of Andrew nowadays, but her thoughts were not always obedient. She wondered whether, when he heard of her marriage, he would heave a sigh or whether his silence had meant that he was not sure of himself. It was fatally easy not to be sure of yourself just when you ought to be. Brenda looked at the future with considerable misgivings and wished that Yes did not mean so much in some cases. She liked the idea of going to Germany for a long time and of making an interior that should have all the charm of both countries. She liked the prospect of German opera and German chamber-music all the year round, she looked forward to long dreamy summers in quaint old-world forest villages

where geese waddled along dusty roads and young storks looked wisely from their nests on high church towers. She pictured a German winter as a glittering carnival of snow and sleighs and clear frosty air, with an interlude of Christmas trees and queer-shaped Christmas sweets and cakes. All this she would enjoy. But would she enjoy the constant companionship and domination of Lothar? Would his passion for her so transmute his nature that he would become forbearing and sympathetic? If not, what would her life be? for though she hated quarrels she loved independence and had been used to it, especially independence of thought and feeling.

"I suppose that in marriage there must be give and take," she said to her mother one day. "I suppose that imperceptibly you grow towards each other and hardly know whose influence is paramount."

"In a happy marriage it must be so," said Mrs. Müller.

"An unhappy marriage must be unbearable," said Brenda.

X

LOTHAR wrote to Brenda twice a week. His letters were full of his burning love and his impatience for their marriage. They were a great support to Brenda, because she felt sure that love begets love. At least she tried to feel sure. She had no time for prolonged qualms about the future. In six weeks she had to buy a trousseau of German size and thoroughness, choose furniture for her new home and help with the arrangements for her wedding. From morning till night she was in shops, in fitting-rooms or at the writing-table. It was amusing till it became oppressive; but by the time she longed for a day's rest she could not get it. So when she put on one of her new gowns to meet Lothar and his parents at Charing Cross she perceived that she looked paler and thinner than usual. Nevertheless, as she waited on the platform with her father, she was a conspicuously elegant and charming figure, for she knew how to wear her clothes, how to do her hair and how to put on a hat and veil. She wore a dark blue coat and skirt with a little embroidered waistcoat that genius had designed. Above the waistcoat you saw a little of her fine lace blouse and the row of pearls her father had given her on her birthday. Her hat was slightly tilted and had no trimming but a prancing note of interrogation and a veil. She wore pale gray gloves and very good gray suède shoes. Her sunshade was one of her wedding-presents and had a costly

handle of real jade. In fact, she looked like London, the London that in its own way knows as well as Paris or Vienna how to dress itself; and the combined effect of what she wore was quiet but rather worldly. She did not look in the least like her thoughts, which were anxious and shrinking; and her father had no idea that she was in two minds whether to stay and face the music or run away and hide till the guests they were to meet had departed again. But it is easier to think of hiding than to do it, and at any rate Brenda, who hated scenes and fusses, could not bring herself to go. She stayed silently beside her father, looking rather white and feeling rather depressed.

"There they are!" said Mr. Müller, when the train moved slowly in, and Brenda followed him to the carriage from which Lothar, in civil clothes, was helping a tall, stout elderly woman wearing a shiny alpaca traveling cloak and an impossible hat several sizes too small for her and unsuitably saucy in shape. Behind her came Uncle Wilhelm, and he had not altered at all, for he arrived in England as he had left it three years ago, out of temper.

Directly Lothar saw Brenda he kissed her as warmly as you can kiss any one through a veil, and then, keeping her hand tightly in his, turned to his mother and said—

"Little Mamma, I bring thee my beloved bride."

With quite unreasonable intensity, Brenda felt that she did not want to be brought. She hated shiny alpaca coats, and the woman appraising her with a chilly eye looked like a mountain of all the disagreeable virtues. She looked like her ungracious letters and like Uncle Wilhelm's trumpet blasts when he blew praises of her thrift and industry.

"I hope you have had a pleasant journey?" said Brenda.

"We have had a most unpleasant one," snapped

Frau Erdmann. "Have you not observed that there is a wind?"

"In London . . ." began Brenda.

"I have only just arrived in London. We have been on the sea, and when the wind blows the English Channel is rough."

"I suppose it is."

"And when the sea is rough I am sick."

"I'm so sorry," murmured Brenda. "Was Uncle Wilhelm sick too?"

"Of course he was sick. Don't you see how green he looks? We both suffer with our stomachs, which are not normal."

By this time Uncle Wilhelm was ready to turn his attention to Brenda, while Mr. Müller and Lothar went off with a porter to get the luggage. Lothar was to sleep at Jem's house in Kensington Square, but it had been arranged that he was to dine in Avenue Road to-night in order to see as much as he could of Brenda. Jem had promised to fetch him in his car after dinner.

"You are paler and thinner than you were three years ago," said Herr Erdmann. "I suppose it is London life that destroys a girl's bloom at an early age. In this light I should take you for at least twenty-five."

Brenda could not think of anything to say in answer, so she changed the subject.

"I'm sorry you've had a rough crossing," she began.

"Don't speak of it," said Uncle Wilhelm with a shudder. "My stomach is not normal. It will take me several days to recover, and then it will be time to go back. I should not have come, but my wife insisted. She has the intellect of a man, but where Lothar is concerned she is wax. I only hope that you will be able to conquer her lifelong antipathy to everything English."

Brenda hoped so, too, but felt uncertain. Frau

Erdmann showed no sign of thawing to her son's *Braut* on the way home, but leaned back in the car with her eyes shut while she gave vent to inarticulate sounds suggestive of internal sufferings. When she got to Avenue Road her large presence seemed to fill the hall and overwhelm the slight trim figure of her hostess, who listened with a polite but twinkling eye to the narrative of her sister-in-law's Odyssey. The train had been overcrowded, sleep had been impossible, food uneatable, dust phenomenal, heat unbearable, and the waves of the Channel mountains high. But these were trials that sank to nothing in comparison with what they had endured at Dover, where they had been unable to procure strong *bouillon* although every intelligent person knew that after a sea journey strong *bouillon* was necessary even to normal stomachs. What then must the absence of it inflict on those whose digestive organs were abnormally sensitive and delicate.

"Perhaps you would like to go to bed instead of coming down to dinner?" said Mrs. Müller with the best intentions.

"I should not like it at all," said Frau Erdmann angrily. "I know that in England hospitality is not understood as we understand it; but I suppose that after traveling day and night to see you I may be allowed something to eat. Otherwise we will go straight to an hotel."

"Do not get so excited, Sophie," interposed her husband. "Of course, you will have something to eat in my sister's house. You will feel much better after a good dinner."

"A strong *bouillon* is all I require," announced Frau Erdmann, and waddled upstairs to the room appointed to her. There was a little trouble about an open window and an insufficiency of pillows and eiderdowns which Mrs. Müller soon set right, and then there was peace in the house till the dinner-gong

sounded. This brought the Erdmanns straight into the dining-room, while the Müllers innocently waited for them in the drawing-room, and when they met Frau Erdmann was in a state of offence again. She had not been told to go first to the drawing-room, she said, and she could not be expected to guess that even in England anybody was ridiculous enough to enter one room when the business of the moment was to eat in another. Such ways might be very well at court, but not in a plain burgher household, and at her age she could not be troubled to observe them. She had her own ideas of what was *sittlich* and did not require any lessons in behavior from a country that had the most dirty and ignorant working classes in the world. She had asked for strong *bouillon,* but this soup was made with cream and therefore unsuitable to her digestion. She would wait for the fish, although she regretted that it was to be sole and not salmon. She thought that in England people could offer their guests salmon without any undue strain on their pockets, but no doubt she was mistaken, since it was not forthcoming; for Marie must know that Wilhelm ate salmon with enthusiasm.

So the dinner proceeded, and Brenda observed that both her uncle and aunt ate largely, although they criticized everything except the wine, which was German. At dessert they drank port, but complained that it was heavy and probably bad for the liver. After dinner Frau Erdmann said that the English climate was very damp and chilly, and that unless Marie lighted a fire she would probably spend the night screaming with rheumatism. She said this as the three ladies moved towards the drawing-room where a fire was burning; and though the sight of it cheered her, she reflected, as she sat down beside it, that in a plain burgher household fires in August were extravagant.

"If you bring these ideas with you, my poor son

will be ruined," she said to Brenda, who had knelt down beside the fire and put on a log from a basket close by.

"I suppose I shall have to get used to stoves," said Brenda.

"They are more agreeable and more practical," said Frau Erdmann. "This kind of grate gives the minimum of warmth with the maximum of dirt. It would not suit us. We like cleanliness and comfort."

"When I got the news of Lothar's engagement I became unconscious," she continued, turning to Mrs. Müller. "Never! Never! I murmured to my daughters, who were both supporting me. Lothar cannot have chosen an Englishwoman."

"Don't you like Englishwomen?" asked Brenda.

"What is there to like in them? I have seen hundreds abroad and they are all exactly the same. They dress abominably and get hot over games and behave as if the world belongs to them. They have no Kultur."

Brenda looked at her future mother-in-law and tried to understand the state of mind of a woman who, looking as she did and behaving as she did, could still talk of manners and civilization. Frau Erdmann wore a high-necked brown satin gown trimmed with Paisley embroideries and grotesquely cut in a clumsy caricature of the prevailing mode. It had no doubt cost a good deal, for the satin was of a heavy quality, but it was conspicuously ugly and unbecoming. So was the lady's *coiffure*; for she wore her thin sandy hair in smooth early Victorian wings over her ears, while at the top of her head she had a coil of false plaits that did not pretend to match. She wore a heavy watch chain, a valuable diamond brooch and gold bangles; and her large solid linen handkerchief would have covered a good-sized sofa cushion. She had satin shoes that went well with her gown, but did not go well with thick hand-knitted gray stockings.

She explained, however, that she possessed silk stockings, but could not venture to wear them in this damp climate; and she added that, in her opinion, health was more important than elegance.

"I should think that you often catch cold," she said, looking with disfavor at Brenda's pretty bare neck.

"I am bringing mostly high gowns with me," said Brenda. "I suppose I shall want one of this kind sometimes."

"You will want one for large ceremonious dinners or for balls. Not otherwise. I told you so in my first letter. If you appeared like this in Berlin at a famliy party, every one would laugh.

"Would they?"

"Naturally. What else could they do? To me your appearance is ridiculous."

"Would you like to see Brenda's presents?" said Mrs. Müller.

"Where are they?"

"In the billiard room."

"Then I would rather see them a little later. At present I prefer to sit quite still and converse agreeably. It is necessary to the digestion. What kind of entertainment are you giving to-morrow evening?"

"We are not giving an entertainment at all," said Mrs. Müller. "We are going to dine at my son's house, but it will only be a family party."

"Do you mean to say that you have no *Polterabend,* no festivities on the night before your daughter's wedding, no poems written by members of the family, nothing acted, nothing sung . . ."

"Nothing at all," said Brenda. "Will Lothar be dreadfully disappointed?"

"For Lothar I cannot speak. He perhaps knows what to expect. But when I think of Elsa's *Polterabend* and even of Mina's! They were brilliant affairs, I can assure you. Even in Berlin they excited

attention. After all, when a daughter marries one exerts oneself a little. At least it is so with us. But every land has its own customs. Does it not alarm you, Brenda, to reflect that on the day after to-morrow you will become the wife of a German officer?"

Brenda thought that Frau Erdmann had a knack of asking questions it was difficult to answer. In some of its aspects she would not dwell on her marriage at all, because the only way to go through with it was to keep her mind a blank; but it had not occurred to her to feel afraid of her future position or to regard it as in any way a brilliant one.

"My sister has married an English officer," she said. "They are very happy."

"The officers of the German army are not toy soldiers like yours," said Frau Erdmann. "Besides, their position is different. They are not ashamed of their uniform."

"I shall be glad to see Lothar in his again," said Brenda.

"Lothar looks well in everything," said Frau Erdmann, bridling. "He is an exceptionally fine man."

As she spoke the men came into the room, and Lothar went straight up to Brenda, but did not sit down.

"I have not had a word with you," he said. "Let us go to your own room."

Brenda hesitated. All her wedding clothes were spread out there for the delectation of her women friends.

"Come and see my presents," she said, and took him into the billiard room. It was curtained and in darkness, so she switched on the light. As she did so Lothar shut the door, took her into his arms and kissed her violently; and as it seemed to her everlastingly. She made no attempt to evade him, but his ardor did not communicate itself to her. She

was able to think quite clearly and decide quite surely that she did not like being kissed.

"I hear the others," she said, when, after a lull during which she was not released, he showed every sign of beginning again. "They are coming to see the presents."

Lothar uttered a sound of execration, but did not let her go as suddenly and completely as she expected. The others came in almost directly, and he, with his arm still round her, went to a corner of the big room that was dimly lighted. There he drew her down beside him on a small sofa and talked to her in undertones, while the four older people looked at the presents and talked of them.

"We have had no real bride-time," said Lothar, holding her to him with a determination she considered indecorous under the circumstances. "You still feel strange with me. I see it."

"I agree with the people who want trial marriages," began Brenda, but stopped because Lothar shouted "WHAT!" so violently that their elders, far away as they were, looked up startled.

"I dare say it can't be managed," Brenda went on, "but it seems a pity. If you and I could go away for a fortnight and just find out whether we liked each other well enough . . ."

"I forbid you to talk such nonsense," said Lothar ponderously. "I am surprised and shocked to find that a well-brought-up young girl can have such ideas. Marriage is an institution for the benefit of the weaker sex, and society is founded on it."

Brenda did not know whether to laugh or grow angry. She had spoken with whimsical lightness, knowing that what she proposed was outside the range of practical affairs, and she had not expected her morals to be impugned. Lothar's outburst only served to increase her strong, disturbing conviction that he was a stranger to her and that no glamour of

love was going to make the immediate future easy. She liked him less to-day than she had done in Mannheim, and felt less at home with him.

"I am not proposing to abolish marriage," she began rather impatiently, but with an imperious wave of his hand he quashed further discussion.

"I have said that you are not to speak of such things," he reminded her. "A young bride on the eve of her nuptials should have quite other ideas in her head. I will look at your presents now and compare them with the list I have brought of mine. Perhaps if there are many duplicates we can effect some exchanges."

He got up, and Brenda, feeling more depressed than she had ever done in her life, followed him. A business-like conversation with his parents ensued, which informed her that still heavier and handsomer articles than most of those on the table awaited the happy pair in Berlin; and that the two or three pictures given to her were of an old-fashioned description compared with one painted in spots and representing putrefying bodies on a Balkan battlefield. August Zorn, Lothar's brother-in-law, had presented him with this work of art, and Frau Erdmann said that it was extremely clever but not what she enjoyed looking at herself. What really troubled her, however, was the idea of seeing a production of the highest genius thrown away on a room furnished in the commonplace English style. When she heard that Brenda was sending things from London she knew that poor Lothar would have a home that excited the derision of his more cultured friends.

"In Berlin we have furniture that is designed by artists," she said. "If you had left everything to me, I should have done my best."

"To-morrow I shall look at what the little bride has chosen," said Lothar, "and if it is not to my liking . . ."

"I'm afraid you can't do that," said Brenda. "Everything is packed and sent off. I hope you will like the things, Lothar. At any rate I shall, and they will matter more to me than to you."

"What exactly do you mean?" inquired Frau Erdmann.

"Well . . . as a rule men don't notice furniture much, do they?" said Brenda. "They are less at home."

"I am extremely sensitive to my surroundings," said Lothar. "I frequent several houses where the greatest taste prevails. When you have seen Frau von Prassler's reception rooms, for instance, you have seen something *grandoise*."

"And Elsa!" put in Frau Erdmann. "Nothing can exceed the richness and artistic taste of Elsa's salon now that she has had it redecorated. There is only one opinion about it."

"Brenda has not bought any of her kitchen things yet," said Mrs. Müller mistakenly. She did not mean to give offense, but Frau Erdmann pursed her lips, glared at her husband, and threw back her head as if she were a horse annoyed by flies.

"You hear!" she said. "The kitchen things are left for Berlin. Everything else must come from London. Well, we shall see what London can produce. I have seen nothing here yet that I admire."

"Can you cook?" said Lothar to Brenda.

"I can not," she admitted.

"You must learn as quickly as possible," said Lothar. "I'm sure my mother will be delighted to teach you."

"What do cooks do in Germany?" said Brenda.

"Naturally they cook," said Frau Erdmann; "but they require the guiding eye of the mistress always over them."

"Brenda will soon settle down to German ways and find out what to do," said Mrs. Müller. "She has plenty of sense."

Frau Erdmann looked so skeptical that if she had spoken she could hardly have made her meaning plainer. Herr Erdmann said that one of his daughters had married money and the other learning, and that the professor's wife had to make one mark go as far as two, an exercise that kept her always busy. Lothar praised both his sisters, and said that he had eaten as good a dinner in Mina's house as in Elsa's, which reflected great credit on Mina, since she was the comparatively poor one; and Jem, coming in unexpectedly with Violet, found five people talking about sauces, while Brenda, looking visibly depressed, rearranged some embroideries. When she saw her brother and his wife her face became radiant, and she met them with a warmth that she recognized herself as a danger signal; for surely it was not right that a little bride should run towards relatives she was leaving, as if they brought with them all the harmony of life; while the people holding her future in their hands jarred on her.

Violet had not seen the three Germans yet, and there was a twinkle in her eyes when she had been presented to them: a twinkle quite indecipherable unless you knew her as Brenda did. She told Jem later that Herr Erdmann looked like old Krüger and Frau Erdmann like a bad-tempered cook. Lothar she thought downright offensive at once. His air was the air of Mars amongst civilians, while his manner to Brenda made her laugh and rage by turns, it was so doting and domineering. She could not understand what had possessed Brenda when she accepted him, and she greatly feared that Brenda was asking herself the same question without getting a satisfactory answer. For the girl looked anxious and preoccupied, was unusually silent, and when Lothar addressed her did not respond with any warmth. Every one except Lothar noticed this and felt uneasy. His parents told each other at the end of the day that their son was

making a mistake and would live to rue it. Brenda did not fulfill their expectations in some important ways, for though she had sufficient money she was evidently a girl of extravagant habits, ignorant of all a woman should know and wanting in the deference young females should show to their elders and betters. They feared that Lothar would have trouble in managing her, but agreed that when he came out of love's young dream he was the man to do it.

Mr. and Mrs. Müller were anxious about the future, too, but in a different way. Mr. Müller liked Lothar less than ever, and wished he had never taken Brenda to Heidelberg in June or never allowed her to become a mouthful for her stiff-necked cousin; but Mrs. Müller pointed out that men of German blood made good husbands as a rule, and that Brenda might be happy even if she carried her own parcels, opened her own doors, and was rebuked when the dinner went wrong. In the intimacy of family life these things happened in England, too, and no one was a penny the worse. Besides, Brenda had chosen to marry Lothar, so presumably she loved him. Her mother did not think the girl's dejected manner meant much. She herself had hated Mr. Müller for at least a week before their marriage, and would have run away if she had known where to go. Mr. Müller seemed surprised to hear this.

The next day was so crowded that no one had a moment to consider the situation that was close upon them. Lothar had gone back with Jem and Violet, but he came to the Avenue Road in the morning with a huge basket of wired roses that he presented to his little bride.

"Very tasteful," said his father and mother. "You could hardly buy a finer basket in Berlin."

Brenda, who detested wired flowers, knew that her thanks sounded flat and insufficient. She had not slept much for three nights; she had acute neuralgia

and she felt flat and insufficient from head to foot this morning. Frau Erdmann looked at her with growing disapproval and asked if anything was the matter. Neuralgia she did not believe in at all. It was a disease of the nerves that a strong character could overcome at any moment.

"I'm not a strong character," said Brenda.

"Then it is extremely fortunate for you that you are marrying one," said Frau Erdmann.

It was a day of a thousand patterns all different, thought Brenda. Old friends and servants came with presents, people she had loved all her life and was going to leave. The family solicitor sent his clerk with settlements to sign. The Wilmots arrived with their two little girls, who were to be Brenda's youngest bridesmaids. A great hamper of flowers came from Treva and an unexpected present of a silver rose bowl from Major Lovel. Presents, clothes, letters, telegrams, callers, the children's high cheerful voices, her mother's imperturbable good humor, doors and windows open, the Erdmanns complaining of draughts, the hot summer sun, flowers everywhere, and amidst it all the uncomfortable thought that Lothar's part in the whole tohu bohu went hand in hand with her own. Lothar! who brought her wired roses in the morning, and in the evening when she arrived at Jem's house took her into the library and presented her with a necklace that she saw at a glance was tawdry and pretentious.

"It has only just arrived from Berlin," he said. "Little Mamma chose it for me."

"How troublesome it is, mused Brenda, when one's perceptions are more honest than one's thoughts should be; and when a gift you desire to accept with gratitude rouses a still stronger desire to throw it out of the window. Little Mamma could be seen all over the necklace, in the coarseness of the setting, the garish combination of stones and the florid sprawl

of the design. It had probably cost a good deal, but not nearly as much as a necklace of royal pretensions ought to cost. Even the case looked cheap. Brenda fixed her mind firmly on Lothar's kind intentions, thanked him, and hoped that as most of the stones were colored he would not expect her to wear it with her wedding gown.

"I will put it round your neck myself," he said ardently, "to-night and again to-morrow."

Brenda had known he would wish to do this to-night the moment she saw it, and knew that when he had snapped the clasp he would imprint a fervent kiss on her neck. There was something stereotyped about his actions, just as there was about his opinions and his talk. She thought she almost knew now at any given moment what he would do or say, and she hoped this insight into the machinery of his mind would make life easier.

"I think I won't wear it to-night," she began, and found in a flash that she was deceiving herself if she thought she knew how to deal with him.

"You will wear it to-night," he said angrily. "I wish it. Little Mamma must see it on you. To-morrow she will be crying."

Brenda wanted to say "Damn Little Mamma" because she knew she was going to feel like crying herself to-morrow and did not see what Frau Erdmann had to shed tears about. *She* was not going to marry a man she had accepted in a moment of insane, rosy rapture and had hardly seen since: who brought her a necklace she considered conspicuously vulgar and who clasped it round her neck with a proprietary air and the *beaux gestes* of a magazine hero.

"I hope no one will cry," said Brenda. "Tears are infectious and quite absurd at a wedding."

"For a young girl . . . for a little bride . . . you express your opinions too freely," said Lothar.

She supposed it was the neuralgia, but she thought

it was also the heavy chill of that infernal necklace and the tickle on her neck of the undesired kiss. At any rate she turned on him with exasperation.

"If you call me little bride I shall call you Popsy-Wopsy," she said.

But he only stared at her woodenly.

"What is Popsy-Wopsy?" he asked. "It sounds silly."

"It is silly."

"You are not yourself to-night," he said after a moment's consideration, and opened the door for her to pass out before him.

On looking back she thought that he had behaved better than she had.

XI

ALL through the night it had been touch and go with Brenda. She had undressed and gone to bed, but not to sleep. She had got up, half dressed again, and sat at her open window staring at the silent summer darkness of the garden. Suppose she did it! Suppose she stole out of the house with the few pounds she possessed and sent a telegram to her mother or left a note assuring her that she was alive and well, but could not marry Lothar. It had been done before, and still the world went round. But she would have to walk up and down London all night, and probably be molested or taken up by the police; and the police were so stupid and yet so knowing that they would probably find out who she was and bring her back in time for the civil wedding which was to take place at the nearest Registrar's office at eleven. There was no hurry. If she decided to go, six o'clock would be time enough, just before the servants were up. The quiet coat and skirt she meant to put on for the morning lay ready for her. Her wedding gown was in a wardrobe with her veil and wreath of orange blossom. She was wearing no myrtle. She knew that German brides invariably wore myrtle, but she was English and wished to remain English. She had taken her country for granted till now, when she was going to leave it for ever. All the liberty and sweetness of life here she had taken as a matter of course, and even joined in the laughter against England that seems amusing

while you live there enjoying all it gives. She had thought it would be a pleasant adventure to set up house in a foreign land and taste its strangeness; but she had not thought enough of the way back, a way closed by marriage. She could never come back except as a visitor and by permission of Lothar. He had promised her that she could come back every year for some weeks, and unless she stole out of the house now at the eleventh hour she would have to depend on his promise. Altogether she would be dependent on him, it seemed—dependent on his pleasure and displeasure, on his opinions, on his family. Her own family would be a long way off henceforward. She lay down, half dressed, outside her bed, weary, dispirited and in doubt. So her mother found her, fast asleep, next morning. She had slept through the hour when she might have escaped, slept fast and dreamlessly as she had not done for a week.

"It is ten o'clock," said Mrs. Müller. "I would not allow them to wake you. But now you've only just time to dress."

"I meant to wake at six," said Brenda, still dazed with sleep.

"What for?" said Mrs. Müller, whose hands were full of letters, telegrams and parcels. Her question remained unanswered, but she did not notice it because a maid came in with a breakfast tray and because there were various things to look at and discuss. She was not quite happy about her daughter's marriage, but it never even occurred to her that anything could stop it now.

Anyhow, nothing did stop it. At three o'clock Brenda came out of church married, for better for worse, to Lothar, and at five o'clock she departed with him in her father's car. They were going to Dover that night and to Paris to-morrow. The wedding had been a crowded one and well arranged. Eight bridesmaids and two pages had followed Brenda to the altar,

a full choral service had accompanied her marriage vows, her friends had given her an affectionate send off, and as she took a last look at her old home she saw her own people in the foreground, her father and mother, Jem, Violet and Thekla, and Thekla's two little girls, Mary and Barbara.

"*Gott sei Dank,* that's over," said Lothar. "Take off your veil, little wife. It is impossible to kiss a woman properly through a veil."

"People can see in," said Brenda doubtfully.

"What do I care?" cried Lothar, and strained her fiercely to him.

That sort of thing went on all through the honeymoon, and Brenda found it wearing. If Lothar wanted a veil off he said so without any consideration for her, and if he wanted to put his arm round her he did not mind who looked on. In fact, he walked her up and down the terrace of a Swiss hotel so interlaced that she knew every one English must be laughing at them; but she submitted rather than risk an explosion of temper. He had no control over his temper, she soon found; and quite childish trifles roused it. Wherever they went, sound and fury went with them, so that she dreaded a meal because it usually meant a row with a waiter. She could see that every one who served him hated him, and she knew that his arrogance was never served as well as, for instance, her father's considerate politeness. His behavior to her was uxorious and tyrannical, a blend that could not please a girl as detached and fastidious as Brenda. If she had been blindly in love with him, she might have borne to be adored, scolded, kissed, bullied, checked here and ordered there in a whirlwind of proprietary ardor. But she never had been blindly in love, and marriage did not make her so. There must be something wanting in one of them, she thought, some magnetic quality in him that would have fascinated her, or some strain of the elemental

woman in her that would have surrendered to a mate with a club. When it was time to go to Berlin she felt relieved. He would be hard at work at once, he told her, and she would have many lonely hours. She looked forward to them.

About their arrival in Berlin he preserved a resolute silence that vexed her. He would not tell her whether they were to stay with his parents or in a hotel or in rooms till their home was ready for them, nor would he say in what quarter he thought of living or whether they were to have a flat or what he called a villa. When she questioned him about these matters he evaded her and enlarged on the perfect taste and judgment exercised by Little Mamma and his sisters in domestic matters. He said again and again that though Elsa's husband was rich and Mina's comparatively poor, they were both so blessed in their wives that their existence was one of unbroken comfort. In fact, they were men any man must envy.

"If you model yourself on my sisters in all ways, you will make me happy," he said.

"When you talk like that you remind me that I want to be happy myself," said Brenda, who was finding unsuspected and disturbing wells of anger in herself at times.

"A woman's happiness lies in self-sacrifice and devotion to others. At least with us it does. Our ideas . . ."

"Your ideas about women are out of date," said Brenda. "You will find them all in our older poets."

"You talk nonsense, my little treasure, and if you did not look so pretty in that white *peignoir* you would make me angry. My ideas about women are the right ones. At any rate they will govern your conduct in future. We have women in Berlin with what you call advanced opinions, but no one pays the least attention to them. We do not even allow a woman to attend a political meeting."

"You allow her to do heavy field work. I have seen it."

"Why not? A woman is there to serve men and rear children. Otherwise the world could get on better without her. What does she do for the world? She has no economic existence at all, and she cannot bear arms. All she can do is to devote herself to others. My mamma and my sisters are busy from morning till night and never think of themselves at all."

Brenda naturally wondered whether Lothar's sisters were going to be as tiresome and officious as his mother, and she made up her mind that she would try to live as far from them as possible. With this idea in her mind, one wet afternoon she unfolded a map of Berlin that she had with her and began by finding the Bavarian quarter where she knew that the Erdmanns lived.

"What are you doing?" said her husband when he came in and found her employed in this way. "A map of Berlin! Where did you get it? In London? Have they maps of Berlin in London? Do you understand how to use a map? You see this long street, the Kurfürstendamm! That is where we shall live. You have nothing to compare with it in London."

"I should like to live right in the forest, outside the city," said Brenda.

"We shall live in the Kurfürstendamm," said Lothar, and would say no more. It was not till they actually arrived in Berlin a week later, and were received at the station by a family group with offerings of flowers, that Brenda learned what hung over her. The group consisted of Little Mamma, Elsa, Mina, Professor August Zorn and some children. Brenda, alighting in a limp, weary condition, got a confused impression of gushing embraces, critical glances, flowers, pigtails and a harsh croaking voice that laid

down the law even to Little Mamma. When the group moved on, some of it got into a taxi and some said they would go back, as they came, by tramcar. Brenda found herself in a large taxi with Little Mamma, Lothar and Professor Zorn. She wondered why he came in the taxi and let his wife and children go by car; and she decided at a glance that she did not like him. She had never seen such a plain little pompous irritable man. He had fat cheeks the color of tallow, a button nose, beady black eyes, and a quick, fidgety manner. As he got into the taxi he stumbled over Brenda's dressing bag, and that upset his temper sadly.

"The bag is much too big," he said. "My wife has a small bag which she can carry. It holds my things as well as hers. I hate impedimenta on a journey."

"*Gott sei Dank,* our travels are over," said Lothar. "When one marries one has to have a wedding journey, but ours has lasted too long. I'm sick of hotels."

"Where are we going?" said Brenda, who thought it was time to know.

"Where does a young wife expect to go?" snapped August. "What a strange question! To your husband's home, of course."

"But we have not chosen our home yet," said Brenda.

"It has been chosen for you," said Frau Erdmann solemnly. "You will find everything ready, even to the roast in the oven and the cook to dish it up. It has been hard work, but every day when I returned with an aching head and agitated nerves I said to Wilhelm, 'I do it for my son and he will thank me.' "

"Little Mamma, I thank you from the bottom of my heart," exclaimed Lothar, and printed a resounding kiss somewhere near one of the sandy wings that nearly covered his mother's ears.

"Do you mean that you have taken a flat and put my furniture into it?" said Brenda.

"'My' is a word never heard on the lips of a German wife," said the Professor. "You and all you bring with you are now the property of Lothar."

Brenda had not known many violent dislikes in her life, but she conceived one now for the Professor, and as she thought he was behaving offensively she ignored him and, turning to her mother-in-law, asked again whether a flat had really been taken for them. But before Frau Erdmann could reply August bounced to his feet, livid with fury, and shouted to the driver to stop.

"What is it, August?" said Frau Erdmann. "Are you not well?"

The little man was actually spluttering with rage as he answered.

"I am evidently not good enough for the gracious one. When I speak she does not answer. This is English Kultur. When a man of years and learning addresses such a silly goose, she replies with a stare and does not know enough to open her mouth. But there is a limit to what my dignity can endure. Civility is my right and I insist on it. If Lothar is under the slipper, it is not my affair. Such manners are typical."

Brenda was aghast and looked at Lothar. She saw no promise of support in his face, but only scowling impatience; while Frau Erdmann, after waiting for him to speak, said: "I should have thought you would expect Brenda to be polite to your relatives. My idea of good manners is to reply amiably when I am addressed. August was quite right. It is unbecoming in a young wife to speak as if anything in the house belonged to her only."

"It was quite accidental and shall never happen again," said Brenda, and then the taxi stopped at a tall house liberally decorated with turrets and having

on either side of the front door two colossal figures made of red brick. A lift took the perturbed party to the fourth floor, where on one of the doors Brenda saw a brass plate with her husband's name. A blowsy-looking maidservant wearing a tartan skirt, a velveteen bodice, and a coral brooch appeared in answer to the bell, bid them good day and invited them in. She looked hard at Brenda, addressed Frau Erdmann as *gnädige Frau,* and said that she was all in a flutter because the meat had only just come and would not be ready as early as it should have been.

"Welcome, little wife, to our home," said Lothar as they entered, but he was out of humor and spoke constrainedly.

As Brenda crossed the threshold she saw that the passage was hung with wreaths and garlands of green stuff, as if it had been Christmas, and on the walls she saw slabs of wood on which proverbs and greetings were done in rough poker work.

"All these Mina and the children have prepared," Frau Erdmann pointed out, and then, throwing open a door, she said in a proud voice, "The dining-room!"

It really was a trying moment for Brenda, who had thought out her color schemes with the greatest care and chosen all her furniture in relation to the walls and carpets she meant to have as a setting. She wanted a warm glowing dining-room with sun on the breakfast table, a Persian carpet on the floor and curtains to go with the tawny pinks of it.

"The dining-room shall be either orange or rose, according to what I find," she said to her mother. "The drawing-room shall be creamy white mostly and my bedroom green and blue. I know just how it will all look, and you must soon come to see it." And now—here was the dining-room with the furniture she had chosen set against walls that looked as if large brown chenille serpents were crawling over a

sickly yellow ground. The ceiling was in heavy shades of brown and gamboge to match the walls, and the curtains were of thick chocolate reps with elaborate upholstered canopies. Even the carpet was brown, and on the crookedly set dinner table there was a vase of artificial flowers.

"Very practical," said the Professor. "Very rich and elegant, too. Little Mamma has taste. That one must allow. Elsa wanted light colors here, I believe, but she need not consider expense at all. This brown will last a lifetime and does not fade much. We have it ourselves in our salon."

He looked like it, thought Brenda, and followed Frau Erdmann through a communicating door into the drawing-room, which had been distempered a hard cold slate, neither blue nor gray.

"This room is not to my taste," began Frau Erdmann, and Brenda said unwarily that perhaps it could be altered and that she had thought of having ivory white walls. Her Chesterfield and all her big comfortable easy chairs were covered with an attractive flowery chintz and she had found some fine pieces of old furniture for this room, one of which was an inlaid French cabinet with good-sized drawers.

"I was not thinking of the walls," said Frau Erdmann. "The walls are as I chose them, and if they are not pleasing to you I am sorry. I did my best, and more than that no one can do. But cotton chair covers in the salon I should not have advised. In a bedroom, yes, but in a salon one expects velvet or brocade. I should also have preferred a suite of new furniture such as you can buy at several places in Berlin. Your chairs are a shape that we consider quite out of fashion and your other pieces do not match. The chest of drawers would look better in a bedroom in my opinion, but Elsa seemed to think it should be placed here. She has some ideas I do not hold with, but she agrees with me about these cotton

covers. I am afraid this room will make a bad impression, and that is a pity, as you have your way to make amongst us. People will think that you are trying to bring over English fashions. Even the Empress Frederick found that it was a mistake to do that. We Berliners are quite satisfied with our own taste in every way."

Brenda did not reply to this torrent of expostulation, because her spirits had fallen to zero. She knew Lothar well enough now to know that he was thoroughly out of humor. August was eying her with malevolent curiosity, and when the whole party moved on into her bedroom she hardly knew whether she wanted to laugh or cry. For here the walls and the carpet burst upon her in glaring red, a red that was oppressive and detestable. The windows were tightly shut, the air smelled stuffily of new wood, new paint and new blankets, and behind her washstand some one had hung a great breadth of coarse straw-colored canvas on which monkeys cut out of black cloth had been stitched by machine.

"What fascinating monkeys!" said Brenda, going up to them.

"They are the last word in artistic decoration," said August, and Brenda instantly wished they were not on her walls.

"I hope you are satisfied with everything," said Frau Erdmann.

"But, Little Mamma, I am more than satisfied," cried Lothar. "When I think of all the trouble you have saved us and the fatigue you have undergone at your age, I cannot thank you enough."

Brenda had gone to one of the windows which she found looked out at a courtyard, surrounded by tall houses. She knew enough of Continental life to know that a room with such an outlook would be noisy all day and most of the night, and that the only way of securing privacy was by keeping curtains closely

drawn. As she stood there her husband came up to her and spoke in a low voice that she knew had vials of wrath behind it.

"My mother is waiting for you to thank her for all she has done," he said.

"I didn't want it done."

"Nevertheless, you will thank my mother for the trouble she has taken."

With mechanical politeness Brenda turned to Frau Erdmann and said something that might pass for thanks. The ensuing farewells were strained, and when the husband and wife were left to themselves their first words in their future home were words of discord. Brenda had been trying to make up her mind to say little or nothing of the vexation she felt, but Lothar stirred her anger at once.

"*Frauenlaunen?* Women's whims! I've no patience with them," he began.

"I think you ought to have told me," cried Brenda.

"Told you what?"

"Told me that you had commissioned your mother to take this flat and choose these atrocious papers and carpets. I could have explained that I wanted to choose my own."

"August is right," said Lothar. "There is too much 'my' in your point of view. This is not your house. It is mine. You are in it because you are my wife. If I am satisfied, nothing else matters."

"I could not live with these walls. I shall have them all redone at my own expense."

"You will not have one done. I will not permit you to waste our joint income in such a senseless way. You have married a man and not a milksop, and the sooner you find it out the better."

"But surely I am to have money of my own. My father said so."

"It will be spent as I direct."

"Well . . . I hope we sha'n't quarrel about money,"

said Brenda after a moment's reflection. As she spoke she opened her dressing-bag and began to put some of the bottles and brushes from it on her toilet table. Then she rang the bell and told the pearl in the tartan skirt to bring hot water. Frau Erdmann had described her as a pearl and advised Brenda to handle her carefully as she had lived in a baron's family for many years and said frankly that she did not look forward to a mistress with foreign ways. Her own ways seemed to Brenda far from agreeable, for she stood in the doorway wiping her hands on a dirty apron and scowling.

"Hot water?" she echoed. "What for?"

"For me . . . in a can," said Brenda.

"The gracious lady said that in a large flat like this one girl could not be expected to run to and fro all day with hot water. I told her that the Frau Baronin washed once in the morning and not again. If I am to cook the dinner and serve it and wait at table——"

"You will not wait at table unless you put on a clean apron and wash your hands," said Brenda firmly. "You will bring me a can of hot water at once and put another in your master's dressing-room. I am the mistress of this house and you will either obey me or go."

"Quite right," said Lothar, to his wife's surprise, when the pearl, looking sulkier than ever, had departed. "But as a rule my orderly will wait at table."

"Will he know anything about it?"

"Nothing whatever; but I suppose he can learn."

"Why has your mother only engaged one servant? Surely we can afford two."

"I am hungry," said Lothar shortly. "When we have dined we can go into these things. Be quick and put on your blue and green tea gown. As a rule you will wear a blouse in the evening. My mother and sisters would think your tea gowns theatrical.

But none of them will come to-night. They will have enormous tact, and will understand that we wish to spend the first evening in our new home by ourselves. I only hope that, left to herself, the pearl will not spoil the dinner."

XII

LOTHAR told Brenda that she had married a man and not a milksop; but at times she felt that she had married a child—an overbearing, bad-tempered child with the rights of a despot and the manners of a bully. Even by silence and submission she could not always keep the peace. There were days when he wanted to quarrel, when nothing she could do or say would pacify him, and when she found herself between the devil of revolt and the deep sea of humiliation. Generally she gave way even when he interfered unwarrantably, spoiling her pleasure in the little things of life from which so much pleasure springs. He would have no flowers bought either for the table or the drawing-room. He said flowers were an unnecessary extravagance. He would eat this and not that. The piano might be played at certain hours and not at others. Windows Brenda liked open must be shut. The very books she read were inspected and her clothes submitted to family criticism. In Brenda's opinion the family was too much with them. It talked of itself as united, and if union means a frequent interchange of meals, it was. But when the members of it met they squabbled, and Brenda had to walk delicately amongst them. At first she hoped to find a friend in Mina, the Professor's wife, and she did always half like, half pity the small battered-looking woman who spent her days between the kitchen and the nursery, striving to please an implacable man. The scenes there were in that

household! The storms in teacups! The waste of energy and happiness over trifles! Brenda decided after a few experiences that, compared with August, her own husband was good-humored. August seemed to thrive on hatred, and the objects of his hate changed like the wind. But from the first he hated Brenda and all her ways.

"What time is dinner?" she asked him, when soon after their arrival he brought a verbal invitation to dine at his house on the following Sunday.

"The usual time," he snarled.

But there is no usual time in Berlin, and Brenda knew it. You may be asked to any kind of a meal at any time of day, and when you go to tea you may or may not find that your hostess expects you to stay on and eat cutlets for supper. It is safer, however, not to presume on the cutlets.

"We are to dine with August and Mina on Sunday," Brenda said to her husband when he came in.

"What time?" he asked.

"The usual time."

That struck sparks from Lothar's temper at once, and Brenda almost laughed at the variety of phrases he found to describe her imbecility.

"Couldn't you ask what time?" he shouted. "You know it takes half the day to get there."

"I did ask," said Brenda.

"Well?"

"He said the usual time."

"*Gott im Himmel!*" cried Lothar, and asked the heavens to be his witness that it was enough to drive a man crazy. Such fools women were that they could not ask a plain question and get a plain answer. Now he himself would have to write since the Zorns were not on the telephone.

"My dear Lothar," said Brenda, growing angry herself, "I asked August what time they dined and he hissed with fury and bounced out of the room.

He has the manners of a monkey. I was going to say of a savage; but savages have fine manners, as a rule."

"You think too much of manners," said Lothar. "August is a scholar, not a courtier."

It was now the end of October, and bitter cold in Berlin. Brenda was sitting in the dining-room because Lothar would not have the stove lighted in the salon except when they expected guests. He and Brenda had paid a great many calls soon after they first settled down, and they had been called on in return and entertained in various ways. Most of Lothar's friends were in the army; many of them were very poor. The men of these households were as fine as peacocks, but their womenfolk drudged and stinted from year's end to year's end. They lived on incomes hardly sufficient to keep body and soul together, and as Brenda got to know some of them she discovered little shifts and miseries in their lives that filled her with pity. But she discovered, too, that their pride of caste supported them. The wife of a lieutenant who washed her own clothes, could not pay her bills, and had the brains and the profile of a rabbit, considered that she honored Lothar's relations, the Abels, when she visited them, because the lieutenant was "noble" and Siegmund Abel was a Jew. That, Brenda found, was her sister-in-law Elsa's greatest trouble. When she was too young to understand all that it entailed she had married Siegmund Abel, who was a Jew. Brenda liked Siegmund better than any one in Berlin. He was a tall, dignified man with the sad eyes of Rembrandt's Jewish Rabbi and a quiet, educated manner. He was a good deal older than his wife and did not share in her social ambitions, but he allowed her to spend a great deal of money on entertaining people who thought they did him a favor to go to his house. It was only bit by bit that Brenda got her bearings in

the new waters that were so unlike the familiar currents of London, big, easy-going, tolerant London, where no one minded what you called yourself so long as you were agreeable, and where no one knew or cared what was thought in the city on the Spree. Brenda was often with the Erdmanns and they represented and gathered round them the well-to-do commercial class in Berlin. The Abels were Jewish and entertained army people because Elsa liked them, and artists because Siegmund loved music and painting. Besides, he came of one of those wealthy Jewish families who, by tradition, are hospitable to artists in every German town. His house was a delightful one to go to because he and Elsa both possessed the art of entertaining and the money to do it well. Their divergencies in taste did not result in a want of harmony on the whole, but in amusing variety, and though Elsa was not satisfied with her social position she gave dinners and receptions that every one enjoyed. August's friends mostly belonged to the professor class, and many of them were agreeable, interesting men. Brenda wondered how they could endure August, and before long judged that he was not endured gladly by his colleagues. He complained so much of this one's neglect and that one's pride of place that any one who knew him could read between the lines. Lothar received hardly any one who did not wear the gray uniform; and Brenda found that the uniforms did not mix well with civilians. One of August's grievances against her was her inadequate appreciation of her luck in being admitted to the military and professional circles of Berlin. He was always reminding her of it and informing her that socially she had risen in the world through her marriage. At first Brenda could not understand why his grudge against her was so bitter, but she saw that everything she said and did, even the clothes she wore, her imperfect German, and her ways in the house

exasperated him, while on the contrary Siegmund liked her from the first and stood by her as a friend. So she did not look forward to Sunday dinner with the Zorns, because she knew that in one way or the other there would be unpleasantness. If she opened her mouth she would give offense, and if she remained silent she would be asked whether anything was the matter. Besides, if you preserve an artificial silence in order to avoid trouble, you probably end by looking rather depressed. This, in fact, had happened recently at the Zorns, and August, staring across the table, had said in a challenging voice:

"Why does not Brenda join in our conversation? Can't she understand what we say, or is she out of humor?"

The attention of the whole family circle was instantly fixed on Brenda, and she had been asked if anything was the matter. Siegmund had filled up her glass with wine, Frau Erdmann said that she had no patience with moody people, and Lothar had looked annoyed.

"When you are with my family I wish you would make yourself agreeable to them," he said as they walked home. "It costs nothing, and in Germany a young woman is expected to please her elders."

"I'm afraid some of them are determined not to be pleased," said Brenda.

"I noticed myself at dinner that you looked like sour milk and hardly spoke."

"It isn't always easy . . ." began Brenda, but was stopped, partly by a ridiculous wish to cry and partly by a marital lecture on the duties of a wife towards her lord's relatives.

"What had I better wear?" she said to Lothar when Sunday came and she was going to dress. "Do you think any particular color would soothe August?"

Lothar instantly flew into a passion, hammered on the table with his fist, and said she took a delight in insulting his family. Brenda turned white, wished

she had never tried to be funny about such a serious subject as August, and said she had not meant any harm. She was as apologetic and peaceable as she could be until Lothar said he had been a fool to expect an English girl to fulfill the demands made on a wife in Germany, where family life reached heights of amity and affection undreamed of by other nations. She then lost control for a moment, and said that she had not seen as much quarreling and bad temper at home in twenty-two years as she had suffered from in three months in Berlin. It was an unwise thing to say, because it provoked a new and worse explosion. If she had remained as gentle as a dove, bearing all things patiently, Lothar's wrath would have spent itself in time, and there would have been fair weather till this or that provoked it again. But to say that he and his people had tempers and were quarrelsome cut him to the quick, and he raged as he had never raged before in proof of the family harmony. When he subsided it was nearly time to go to the Zorns, and Brenda had to dress in a jiffy, because to keep Lothar waiting in his present mood was more than she dared risk. They had found out that dinner was at two, so she put on a dark blue coat and skirt with a white *crêpe de Chine* blouse that had cost five guineas but looked simple to the ignorant eye. She had meant to keep on her hat, but the pressure of the family assembled in the hall to welcome them obliged her to give it to the maid waiting to hang it up. "Peace at any price," she thought, but found as usual that peace is impossible when one side means war. Her hostess, Mina, was dressed to-day in a flowing shapeless garment of vivid green silk, cut so as to show the poor woman's brown bony neck and the hard collarless line unsoftened by lace or chiffon. An enormous old-fashioned diamond brooch fastened it in front, her shoes and stockings were a yellowish tan, and her thin colorless hair was scraped back from her face

and twisted in a little knot on the top of her head. She looked hot with anxiety and hard work, but she stood in the center of the room surrounded by an admiring family circle, who all said her new gown was a colossal success.

"Very becoming," said Lothar, when asked his opinion.

"Very tasteful," said Frau Erdmann, who wore her brown satin, "very flattering to your guests to put it on. Elsa, our Parisian, has also come in her new velvet. Has your wife nothing in her wardrobe then, Lothar, but these short cloth skirts and little *Backfisch* blouses? I hear of her appearing in great elegance at other places. But I suppose for her husband's family anything is good enough."

Brenda understood the allusion. Some days ago she had been at a large dinner at the Prasslers, and luckily Elsa had told her just in time to dress as she would have done in England. She had worn her wedding gown and her pearls, and had charmed every one not as demented by Anglophobia as the Erdmanns and the Zorns.

"I'd have come in silk attire to-day if I'd known they'd like it," she whispered ruefully to Siegmund, "but I never know what they want. Last Sunday I put on a voile gown and a fur coat and they said I had overdressed for the simple family circle. August talked at me all the afternoon."

"Never mind," said Siegmund. "Next Sunday the family meets at my house and you shall wear a potato sack if it pleases you."

"I'll wear an embroidered teagown if it makes them happy. I should feel a worse fool in that than in a potato sack at this time of day."

"They know nothing of such things," said Siegmund. "I should not let them vex you. It will spoil your hunger and we always have a good dinner here. Mina is a perfect cook."

"We are having awful dinners!" sighed Brenda. "Every day there are scenes."

"How is that?"

"My mother-in-law engaged a pearl for us and she can't cook."

"Why don't you send her away?"

"Lothar will not. She was engaged for three months, so we should have to pay her wages. He thinks I ought to train her."

"Would that be impossible?"

"How can one train another when one knows nothing? Besides, the pearl is three times my weight and throws things about if I go near the kitchen. She cheats us, too."

Siegmund's wise eyes rested rather anxiously on Brenda. She spoke lightly, as if what she said was half in joke, but he judged from her general appearance that she was not finding life a joke just now. He had not seen her before her marriage, but he saw that she had changed since she came to Berlin and that she did not look well or happy.

"I believe that Lothar bullies his wife," he said to Elsa when they got home.

"I've no doubt he does," said Elsa. "Lothar is a bully. He is known to be."

"Can't you stand by her?"

"I can't defend her from Lothar. He has something to complain of, too. Brenda does not know how to keep house, and she allows herself to be cheated. He says their food bills are absurd. It is the old story. He was carried away by her pretty face and now finds that she does not suit him. Why didn't he marry Toni Lieber? She would have brought him half a million and known how to send the pearl packing. Brenda is not awake to her duties."

That was what all the members of Lothar's family concluded after knowing Brenda for a couple of months. She did not suit Lothar and she could not

keep house. She knew nothing, *meine Liebe,* nothing at all. She had never heard that you can buy the roots of parsley for flavoring soup, or that the giblets of a goose must be saved for a stew, or that the family washing should be done by the pearl once a month in the attic, while she herself opened the door to callers and did the cooking. She had actually been shocked and surprised to find Mina cooking her family's midday dinner, although Mina had been ironing since six o'clock, and she had said that it was cruel to let Mina work like that when she had a headache. Mina always had headaches. She was anæmic. But was a headache a reason for allowing a family to go dinnerless or perhaps dine on scraps? Lothar would soon suffer from his stomach, the family said, because Brenda did not look after his food properly. She did not care about eating herself, so she did not know how to comfort a man with dishes so succulent and filling that after eating of them to repletion he felt content with the world. As things were he was never content. His temper was more on edge than usual, and now that he had married an Englishwoman his hatred of England seemed to boil over just as August's did. For Brenda's blood did not count in Berlin and was hardly ever remembered. She never thought of it herself amidst the pangs of homesickness that made her ache for an English voice and an English face.

She tried hard to walk warily and refrain from giving offense. She heard endless stories against the Empress Frederick, all of which pointed a moral; and the moral was invariably that no one English coming to Berlin must try to introduce English ways or English goods into this city of supermen. She soon knew that unless she committed arson her London chairs and tables must remain as witnesses against her, rousing that curious blend of grudge and disapproval that is the keynote of German Anglophobia. But most of all she felt that she, herself, moved in an

aura she could not disperse, that it emanated from the British Empire, and that at the worst it excited hostility, at the best, estrangement. She liked some of Lothar's brother officers and some of their womenfolk, but she never felt quite at home amongst them. No doubt the fact that she was not free to choose her friends made a difference. In this respect Lothar imposed his will absolutely. It was his house and no one should be asked to it without his approval, nor should Brenda go to any house without his permission. And his exclusions were not her exclusions. He hated Jews, he sniffed at artists, he looked down on business men. In fact, he avoided all civilians except those in his family and some whose wealth acted as a magnet. At first the everlasting uniforms amused Brenda. The men who wore them had their own code of manners and it was not the English code, but at any rate they had formulas of politeness towards women. They were not babyish, quarrelsome pedants like August. Some were gentlemen. Some, in her opinion, were not, in spite of their swagger and in spite of their titles. One day at the Abels Elsa asked a Baron Amsing, a lieutenant in a cavalry regiment, what use was made of the long lance she had seen him ride with on parade. He was a man Brenda would not have had in her house, in her sister-in-law's place, for though he visited the Abels frequently he treated them with insufferable arrogance and condescension.

"What is your long lance for?" asked Elsa.

"Damit hetzen wir die Juden!" answered the man with the high cackling laugh of his kind. "We harry Jews with it."

Brenda waited until Siegmund and Elsa were both out of hearing. Then addressing the Baron suddenly, she said:

"Do you know that Herr Abel is a Jew?"

"Of course I know it," he answered sneeringly.

Brenda looked at him, and her look was like the flick of a whip on the hide of his self-esteem. It did not condemn. It expressed surprise at such manners.

"In England you pet the Jews," he said. "We know better here."

"Except when you are asked to eat at a Jew's table and drink a Jew's wine," said Brenda.

Nothing happened. The man got red in the face, stalked away and never spoke to her again. Nothing happened, but she went home thoroughly depressed.

"I'm getting as coarse-tongued as they are," she said to herself.

XIII

MR. MÜLLER sent his daughter her quarterly check just before Christmas and told her to pay it into her own account at the Deutscher Bank. He had insisted, when she married, that her income should be in her own hands, and Mrs. Müller had told her daughter that financial independence helped a woman over many difficult places in married life. But hitherto Brenda had not been independent, although her first check had arrived at Michaelmas. Lothar said that the money was wanted for the tradespeople employed by Little Mamma to decorate and furnish their flat, and that a large portion of it had been spent on the kitchen. He said that a German father who undertook to furnish his daughter's home fulfilled his obligations even down to such trifles as saucepan holders and wooden spoons; and that what Brenda had sent from London was only half the affair. He seemed to have some reason on his side. Anyhow he took possession of her check, and presumably paid furnishing bills with it. He gave Brenda nothing but a bare weekly sum for housekeeping, and she, who had never been short of money in her life, began to have anxieties about making two ends meet. Luckily she wanted no clothes, for though she had married in August her parents had given her furs and some winter coats and skirts. But when the second check came she told Lothar that she wished to begin her own banking account.

"I will not hear of it," said Lothar.

He had just come in, but till he spoke Brenda had not noticed that he was in a bad temper. He was scowling at the carpet, but when they were by themselves he was usually scowling and chary of speech. Sometimes they sat together all the evening in a silence that made her think solitary imprisonment would be less oppressive. If she spoke he would look up from a book, answer shortly and immerse himself again. She was not a chattering person, but after a long lonely day an evening spent in this way depressed her to the point of sleeplessness and she would lie awake wondering if life was to go on to the end in this atmosphere of chilly failure.

"My father wishes me to have control of my own money," she said now.

"What your father wishes cannot regulate your life now that you are married."

"But I wish it very much myself, Lothar."

"I've no doubt you do. You wish many things that cannot be done. Your money will be placed with mine in my bank and spent for our mutual benefit as I direct. That is the German custom and we shall follow it."

"I thought that my father made it clear that his allowance to me was to be in my own hands."

"He may have done."

"Surely you remember?"

"Why should I remember? What does it signify since I decide otherwise? Has the new check come? We shall need every penny of it to carry us through Christmas and New Year."

"I dare say we shall, and I am quite willing to spend most of it on our general expenses; but I want a little for myself, too."

"What can you want? You had enough finery for six women in August, four or five months ago. Women know nothing about money. Their one idea is to squander it."

"That is not fair," began Brenda. "I never have penny . . ."

She stopped short, as she often did in a tussle with Lothar, appalled by the sordid depths to which it was leading her. She would rather do without money than squabble about it. Yet her sense of justice drove her to speak again.

"I am sure that my father wishes me to have what I need," she said.

Lothar glanced at his wife with actual dislike in his cold eyes. Her beauty was under a cloud, her figure was losing its lines, and she had been sickly for months now. The stork was expected in May, but the thought of her recovery did not present itself as vividly as the constant sight of her impaired looks.

"You are a bad manager," he said; "you understand nothing of housekeeping."

This was both true and untrue. Brenda never had kept house till she came to Berlin, and she began under unusual difficulties, in a strange country and saddled with the odious pearl engaged by Little Mamma. She had just replaced her by a more promising one and given mortal offense to the family by doing so. She had also had fierce battles with Lothar on the subject of servants, because she wanted to keep two and he would not allow it. She had offered to pay for the second herself, and he had pointed out that her money was part of their united income and not in any sense a personal possession. She had been so taken aback by this repudiation of his covenant with her father that at the time she had not said much; but when her check came she knew that she must try conclusions. She was willing to contribute most of it to their general expenses. But she wanted to follow her father's instructions and open her own account at a bank; and she wanted to use a little of it in preparation for that coming event in May.

"Here is my father's letter," she said, handing it

to him. "He tells me to put the check in the Deutscher Bank."

"Where is the check?"

"In this envelope."

"Give it to me."

Brenda looked at him, but he did not meet her eyes. He was scowling, his eyes were fixed on the floor and his whole manner proclaimed his dissatisfaction.

"You are breaking your word," said Brenda.

That let loose the floodgates of his wrath. She had vowed for the sake of her child that at any cost she would stave off one of these scenes when his temper exploded in such sound and fury that she felt shattered by it for days. But her financial independence had become a weighty matter. The command of money would have eased many of the questions about which they disagreed, and she desired it largely because of the peace it would bring. She still strove for peace, although she might have known by this time that it was not in her power to insure it.

"In Germany men are men," shouted Lothar. "We are not women-ridden, as you are in your decaying country. We know how to deal with our wives. Your place is in the kitchen and the nursery. You will spend what I allow you and not a penny more. I would not have you in my house on any other terms. Tell your father what lies you please. He can do nothing. I am master and mean to remain so."

Brenda was listening, as she usually listened to his tirades, in silence. She wrapped herself in it because she knew of no other armor, but it was not always effective. Silence can convey reproach, and when Lothar was on the high horse he smelled offense in it.

"Do you hear and understand what I say?" he asked now, bringing his fist down on the table so heavily that some glasses on it moved and clattered. Brenda replied by handing him her father's check. He

looked at it, saw that it was indorsed and put it in his pocket.

"It is time that we returned some of the hospitality we have accepted," he went on. "We must ask people to dinner. But how to manage it I don't know."

"I don't either," said Brenda. "You can't give dinner parties with one servant and a boy like Fritz, even in Berlin."

"What do you mean by even in Berlin?"

"Well . . . we have been to meals with people who keep one servant: a light supper or the usual mid-day dinner of two or three courses. Even then the mistress must have worked like a black to have things ready."

"Why should she not work? Does her husband not work? Why should a woman sit in an easy chair all day reading silly romances and filling her head with nonsense? You would probably find your health greatly improved if you bustled about in the house as my sisters and mother do. But we are wandering from what I have to say. It is strange that a woman who considers herself intelligent can never stick to the point. I intend to ask the Prasslers and half a dozen others to dinner. We can easily manage ten at this table."

The Prasslers were go-ahead wealthy people, with whom Lothar had lately become intimate. Unfortunately Brenda did not like them. Frau Prassler had been a very rich girl of Jewish extraction and the marriage had been one of mutual convenience. She gained the place she coveted in army society and her husband got his debts paid and his house run luxuriously. They lived in the upper part of a large villa in a fashionable part of the Thiergarten and entertained profusely. Frau Prassler was distantly connected with Siegmund Abel, but though the households met there was rivalry rather than friendship between the

women. Jutta Prassler, usually known as "the beautiful Jutta," looked down on Elsa, or pretended to, because she had married a Jew; and Elsa looked down on Jutta because she was by birth a Jewess and tried to forget it. Elsa's brother was an officer, but socially a brother is not as useful as a husband. At any rate the Prasslers gave themselves more airs than the Abels and had had a large dinner yesterday in honor of the Colonel's birthday, to which no civilians had been asked. Nor had the officers' wives been asked. Jutta had been the only woman present and Lothar had come back full of her *"Geist,"* her diamonds, her gown of scarlet brocade and her aplomb as hostess to twenty men. The dinner itself, the wines served with it and the table decorations had all been superb. To sit down next day to plain boiled *Ochsenfleisch* with horseradish sauce was enough to make any man fret and fume at fate. A medley of memories, scraps of talk, glances, innuendoes, all helped towards his discontent; and so, no doubt, did the wines he had drunk and the late hour to which the revel had been prolonged. For after dinner a few unmarried women had joined the party and there had been dancing late into the night. That Toni Lieber of whom Elsa had spoken had been present, and Frau Prassler had told Lothar that she had just become engaged to the young lieutenant with whom she was dancing, that he had nothing but debts, and that she, through the death of an aunt, was richer than ever.

"I wish you would make a friend of Frau Prassler," he said moodily to Brenda to-day, "that is if she would allow it. She is my ideal of what a woman ought to be. I recommend her to you as a model."

"What do you want me to imitate?"

"Her *chic*! Her *savoir vivre*."

"Do you mean her clothes and her entertainments? They are both expensive."

"Money has nothing to do with it. She says so.

Of course she is an extraordinarily clever woman and always amiable."

Brenda's memory was busy, too, for a discussion of this kind becomes a conflict of ideals and whole ranges of thought lie behind the starved spoken word. It outraged every effort and standard of her life to put a woman before her as a model whom she regarded as a personification of all that women should cast aside. She had seen enough of the Prasslers to take their measure. The man was big and powerful, with a low forehead and a heavy brutal mouth and jaw: a man without pity or subtlety, a drinker at times, boorish, and easily stirred to wrath. She had seen a great many men of his type since she had married Lothar, and they clashed with all her old pictures of the dreamy kindly German and of the shrewd, knowledgeable German, pictures of which her father was the prototype. The beautiful Jutta she judged to be as hard as nails, cynical, a coquette of the order Germans call *"raffiniert,"* and by instinct hostile to other women.

However, Brenda did not utter any of her thoughts about the Prasslers, nor did she refuse to consider the question of dinner parties given in a *ménage* with one maid and a mistress whose only desire just now was to live in hiding and endure the ills she was heir to. If Lothar wanted dinner parties he would have them and shout down her objections; and more than anything else she hated shouting. So she consulted Elsa, got the addresses of a waitress and a good *Kochfrau* and under Lothar's directions issued invitations. She wanted to ask the Abels, but Lothar refused. They did not fit in, he said. This increased Brenda's difficulties, because Elsa took offense and pretended not to know there was to be a dinner party. Little Mamma said pointedly that if her son excluded his family when he entertained he must be doing it under influence, and Mina hinted that the simple wife of a

professor could not come to the assistance of a hostess with such grand ideas. A *Kochfrau* had never entered her house. She was her own *Kochfrau* and had always succeeded in giving her husband and his friends satisfaction.

So Brenda, who had been out a good deal in Berlin and knew what was expected, relied on herself. She was shrewd enough to reckon with her own inexperience, and because of it to put her whole mind into the business and try to think of every detail and provide against every hitch. When the day came she laid the table herself quite early in the afternoon, using for the first time a great deal of the English glass and silver given her at her marriage. Her flowers were white chrysanthemums. Against the muddy browns of Little Mamma's walls white and silver looked better than any color—at least she thought so. As she stood there, tired but satisfied, she heard the front door open and Lothar's voice in the hall. He was speaking to some one he had brought with him, and Brenda looked around for the quickest way of escape. For she felt disheveled, hot and weary, like Mina when she had cooked her Sunday dinner. She had worked hard all day and wore an overall that was crumpled and not as becoming as it would have been a few months ago. But before she could get away the door opened, and Frau Prassler, looking like a fashion plate and carrying a great bunch of small, brownish-red chrysanthemums, entered the room with Lothar.

"Ha, ha! we find the good little woman at her duties," she exclaimed in the high rasping treble that Brenda thought was the complement of the raucous bark affected by the men of her world. "But why white, *meine Liebe*? We are not exactly a bridal pair by this time, are we? I bring you red."

"Thank you very much," said Brenda, taking the flowers from her. She opened the door leading to the drawing-room and waited for the lady to pass in before

her. But Frau Prassler remained where she was and fixed her eyes on the table.

"Very nice! Very nice!" she said after a prolonged survey, during which Lothar watched her anxiously and Brenda waited in amazement. "But in a simple household the wine and fruit should be placed on the table."

"Of course it should," said Lothar. "How quick you are to see what is wanting, dear friend. No wonder that in your house everything runs as if it were oiled."

"The only effective oil in any house is the eye of the mistress," said Frau Prassler, still staring at the table with an expression that seemed to Brenda both grudging and surprised. "The moment that is shut everything goes wrong. I suppose I am not allowed to make a criticism."

"In my house whatever you say and do is welcome," murmured Lothar.

"Then I must say that I should prefer the flowers I have brought. I consider these insipid."

"If you would arrange them for us . . ." began Lothar.

"I am going to put the red ones in the drawing-room," said Brenda hurriedly. "I like the white ones here."

The words were hardly out of her mouth as quickly as the flowers were out of her hands. In a towering passion, the signs of which his wife knew only too well, Lothar marched up to her, took the chrysanthemums and presented them gallantly to the beautiful Jutta, who was looking offended.

"But if your wife prefers to rely on her own taste and her own knowledge," she said, "who am I that I should interfere?"

Lothar went up to his wife again and spoke in a whisper. "Frau Prassler will take tea with us," he said. "You had better see that it is presentably

served and that you are presentably dressed. You look like a charwoman."

Brenda understood that she was dismissed. She knew, too, that if tea was to be served in a civilized way she must send the *Kochfrau* out for cakes and rolls and make the new pearl tidy herself. It took a few minutes to give these orders in a kitchen furious at such an interruption and then to attend to her own appearance, which even after attention was far from satisfactory. However, in about twenty minutes she returned to the dining-room to say that tea was ready, and then she saw the havoc that had been made with the dining-table. Lothar had plumped bottles on it here and there and everywhere, dishes of fruit stood where she had put ferns and flowers, in some cases on the mangled remains of her delicate sprays; and Frau Prassler was still engaged in dragging Brenda's big white blooms out of glasses and thrusting her miserable little brownish red ones in their place. She did this without care, but rather with a sort of monkeyish malice, splashing the tablecloth and giving cries of mock impatience as she dismantled things.

"Tea is ready," said Brenda.

"We have nearly finished," answered Frau Prassler. and addressing Lothar she said, "Shall we remove all the white flowers or leave a mixture? Which do you prefer?"

"What do you think?" asked Lothar.

"What does the little wife say?" inquired Jutta. "She must also be consulted. I am sure she had done her best."

As she turned suddenly to look at Brenda, a heavy branch of chrysanthemums in her hands, she knocked down two tall overladen glasses near the center of the table and about three pints of water began to spread in all directions. A piercing shriek, when she saw what she had done, was presumably to express regret and certainly expressed vexation. Brenda did not

utter a sound. Lothar looked wildly round, dashed at some of the folded napkins and began to mop up the water in an ineffective way.

"English phlegm!" cried Frau Prassler, pointing to Brenda. "She sees our work ruined and does not even spring to our assistance. What is to be done?"

"Will you come to tea now, Frau Prassler?" said Brenda. "Never mind that, Lothar. I will see to things later."

Lothar was now in a mood when the male curses the female and all her works. The women had landed him in a quandary, and the woman he held up to Brenda for imitation did not show to advantage. A pretty mess he and they had made of the dinner-table between them, and in three hours the guests would arrive. Frau Prassler had not been clever over it, although as a rule she was cleverer than other women and so seductive that she was beginning to dominate his thoughts morning, noon and night. Probably Brenda's unfriendly manner had upset the delicate equilibrium of her nerves. She had told him only this afternoon that she was supersensitive, and that she felt sure his wife did not like her.

"What are you going to do?" he said sourly to Brenda when, after a hasty cup of tea, the beautiful Jutta departed. The husband and wife were standing together in the dining-room.

"I am going to relay the whole table," said Brenda.

"Is that necessary?"

"Certainly it is necessary."

She laughed a little as she spoke, for the table looked ridiculous, disordered, and over a large area soaked with water.

"I knew that when we tried to give a dinner everything would go wrong," said Lothar, and then had to be out of the house for a couple of hours. When he came back it was late and he had to dress hurriedly.

Then his guests arrived and he did not see the dinner-table again until he went in with his colonel's wife on his arm; but he had noticed a great jar of brownish-red chrysanthemums in the salon. The table looked just as it had done before Jutta had disturbed it, all crystal and silver, big white chrysanthemums and shining damask. The fruit and the wine were on the sideboard. Frau Prassler looked at Lothar, for she sat on his left side; but he was listening to the colonel's lady and she was complimenting him on his wife's beauty and on the fine taste that she had shown in the arrangement of her dinner-table.

"In these matters the English excel us," she said; "that we must leave them."

"I do not agree with you," put in Frau Prassler sharply. "In Berlin all decoration reaches the highest pitch of art and civilization. What do you admire here to-night? White is not a color at all, and at a feast color is necessary. Besides, it suggests bridal innocence and draws attention to the fact that our dear friends are quite an old married pair."

"You are very free in your criticisms, Frau Major," said the colonel's wife, looking at Jutta with unconcealed dislike. "What would you have put on the table to-night?"

"I should have put dark red."

"With these brown walls! That I cannot believe. You are too clever!"

"But it is true," said Lothar. "Frau Prassler even brought us some red flowers, which you may have noticed in the salon."

"I did," said the colonel's wife; "they were ugly."

"It is all a question of taste," said Jutta.

"Just so," said the colonel's wife, and then changed the subject.

XIV

ALL through the winter and spring Brenda could not go out much, and on the whole she was lonely. She saw the people she liked best occasionally, but she saw most of her husband's family, and intimacy bred no love for them. She settled down to amicable toleration of the three women, Elsa, Mina and Little Mamma. Their ways were not her ways, but they had qualities she valued, and according to their lights, although they criticised, they stood by her. Elsa, in a hard brusque way, tried to befriend her. Herr Erdmann remained what she had always known him, a pompous, overbearing old man, his foot heavily on his family. August was uniformly disagreeable, and Siegmund Abel emerged more and more clearly as the kindest nature and the profoundest mind she knew in Germany. She often thought that without his friendship she must have gone under, so sad were her days.

Lothar hardly troubled to conceal his feelings, and Brenda found herself in the most difficult of positions, one for which there is no general rule. What is a wife to do who considers marriage the most irrevocable of covenants and sees her husband ensnared by another woman, or pursuing another woman? Speech in such cases is the most treacherous of weapons, leading only to false assurances or to anger. Silence is double-edged, for who can be silent in the intimacy of married life without self-betrayal? Brenda had said

nothing when Lothar and Frau Prassler pulled her table to pieces, but they both knew that she was angry; and at night, when the guests departed, Lothar had said nothing about her restoration of it. In fact, he had been in an amiable mood, admitting that everything had gone well.

At first Brenda had not been suspicious, for she was not by temperament a jealous woman. But, as usual, little hints dropped by other people showed her what she might not have discovered for herself. One had met Lothar in the Thiergarten with Frau Prassler; another had seen him at a florist's ordering violets and complimented Brenda on having married a man who paid his wife such pretty attentions; but Brenda, though she did not say so, had never received any violets from Lothar. His fellow-officers often seemed to know of his whereabouts when she did not; and as the spring advanced, she heard of expeditions that were not to include her, and of which her husband had not spoken. Little Mamma began to drop innuendoes about women who were notorious coquettes, and Elsa said bluntly that if the beautiful Jutta ever smiled at Siegmund she would tell her to keep off the grass.

Brenda would not discuss her husband even with his family, and that made things difficult, because they liked to discuss everything and every one at great length. When she remained silent, they thought she was unfriendly and gave herself airs; but they were not easily put off. If she tried to change the subject, they paid no attention to her and talked to each other; and one day Little Mamma and Mina arrived with such solemn faces that Brenda thought something serious must have happened.

"Have you had bad news?" she asked.

Little Mamma softly opened the door of the dining-room that faced the passage and shut it again. Brenda knew what this business portended, because she had seen it acted before. Something had to be said that

servants must not hear, and all servants, even pearls, were eavesdroppers. When Little Mamma had satisfied herself that she could speak, she tramped in a woe-begone way across the room and dumped herself down in the big leather-covered easy chair usually sacred to her son.

"What is Lothar doing to-night?" she said. "Can you both come to supper?"

"I can," said Brenda. "Lothar will be out."

"How do you know that he will be out?"

"He told me so this morning."

"Where will he be?"

"He did not tell me," said Brenda unwillingly. "With some of his friends, I suppose."

The mother and daughter looked at each other meaningly.

"Is it possible that your husband goes out for the evening and does not inform you where he is going? Is that your English conception of married life?"

"Lothar is not English," observed Brenda. "He is the one who is going out."

"When August leaves me for a few hours in the evening, I know exactly where he will spend his time," mewed Mina. "I have no objection to a man wishing to be with other men in his leisure hours. August's brain is so great that no woman can expect to converse with him on equal terms. But I am pleased to say that he has the profoundest contempt for all women. You may have noticed it. The other night, when you expressed your opinion so freely about Wedekind's plays, he said he felt inclined to tell you that your judgment was of no value. But August is always a gentleman."

Mina pronounced the adopted word "shentleman," and the conjunction with August nearly upset Brenda's self-control. She wanted neither to laugh nor cry, but to keep herself to herself as her old nurse used to say. "Now don't slop over, Miss Brenda. Keep

yourself to yourself. We can't always 'ave our own way in this world, and it's babyish to cry." It was a wrong use of the phrase, Brenda knew, and yet it always came into her head in this connection. She must not slop over, she could not expect to have everything her own way, and she must set a guard on her emotions, keeping them as far as possible to herself. Such was the English tradition, even in a little girl's nursery, and she would live up to it.

"Am I to come to supper, then, without Lothar?" she asked.

"If you have any appetite," said Little Mamma solemnly.

At that moment the door-bell rang, and before anything more was said Elsa marched into the room, bringing with her her usual air of prosperity and brusque good-will.

"Siegmund has sent me to ask you to supper to-night," she said to Brenda almost at once. "The car shall fetch you and bring you back."

Brenda looked from one woman to the other, and saw that they were all bristling with indignation.

"But what is happening to-night?" she asked.

"She does not know," groaned Little Mamma. "She has not understood how to win my beloved boy's confidence and affection."

"I cannot be too thankful that August looks down on women as he does," bleated Mina. "He told me the other day that a woman could not even be good unless she had a man to help her."

"*Quatsch!*" said Elsa shortly. "Women don't run after August as they do after Lothar."

"I wish you would tell me what you all mean," cried Brenda. "What is happening to-night?"

"Lothar is giving a supper to twenty people in honor of Frau Prassler's birthday," said Elsa. "Her husband, as you know, is away."

"I didn't know," murmured Brenda. She felt

confused and annoyed, but her instinct was to defend Lothar.

"There is safety in numbers," she said. "A supper to which twenty people are invited is . . ."

"What is it?"

"Well . . . a supper to twenty people! If he were entertaining the beautiful Jutta by herself in a *cabinet particulier* . . ."

Frau Erdmann shuffled uneasily in her chair and cleared her throat.

"A virtuous young wife should not know that such things exist," she pointed out. "They are a French invention."

Brenda was virtuous, but neither deaf nor blind, so she knew enough of the underworld in Berlin to know that the devil would have been pleased with its flourishing condition; and by the underworld she did not mean the poor, but the vicious. It would not have surprised her to find that the beautiful Jutta took her pleasures with it, in secret and expensively.

"*Aber* Brenda," said Mina, "you forget what such a supper costs. They will drink champagne."

"No doubt," said Brenda.

"If you did your duty as a wife you would stop it, even now, at the eleventh hour," said Little Mamma.

"How can I possibly do that?" cried Brenda.

"You could telegraph to Frau Prassler in Lothar's name and tell her he was called away on urgent business, that the supper would not take place and that she must inform the other guests," said Mina. "In August's opinion that would be the best course, but it needs courage; possibly more than a woman ever possesses. You would not tell Lothar what you had done till it was too late for him to give counter-orders. Naturally, he would be annoyed."

"Yes! I think we may take it that he would be annoyed," said Brenda.

"I should insist on going to the supper myself and

taking the head of the table," said Elsa. "If a little snake-cat like Jutta got hold of Siegmund, I should simply trample on her."

"I wish I could trample," said Brenda reflectively. "I'm sure that it is a useful thing to do in some cases."

"I should sit on Lothar's knee, put my arms round his neck and ask him if he still loved his little wife," said Little Mamma, whose ponderous body and commanding spirit did not shut out a strain of sugary sentiment that never touched the cold English heart of her daughter-in-law.

None of these plans commended themselves to Brenda, and with some difficulty she avoided committing herself to one and all of them. The three ladies stayed some time, hoping that Lothar would come home and promising, if he did, to speak plainly to him. But he did not come, and at last, with gloomy faces, they departed. It had been discovered that Elsa meant to regale Brenda with venison and champagne as balm to her wounded feelings, so Little Mamma had magnanimously withdrawn her invitation, only observing that life became sad when old people found themselves persistently neglected. A sharp but short altercation proved that the younger members of the family had twice as many meals with her as with each other; and then, assuring Elsa that she would be ready when the car arrived, Brenda shut the door after them. When she had done so she went into the kitchen to tell the cook no supper would be required, and as she came away Lothar let himself into the hall.

"Tell Fritz to come to my dressing-room," he said to his wife.

Fritz was Lothar's servant, a clumsy young peasant in uniform, bullied by his master and befriended by Brenda whom he adored. He looked after Lothar's clothes, waited at table, broke glass and china, and muddled every errand intrusted to him. When

Lothar struck him he blubbered, when the cook quarreled with him he answered her back and threatened to thrash her. Brenda found that he had a dog's patience and fidelity, but none of the knowledge or deftness you require for a parlormaid; and he was her only substitute for a parlormaid. She knew that he was in the kitchen when her husband asked for him, and she thought that Lothar might have rung for the boy himself. One of the pin-pricks that she felt in her daily life was her husband's way of issuing orders in surly tones. The discourtesy of it always rankled, and to-night it angered her. She said nothing, but returned to the dining-room and rang the bell. Lothar followed her.

"Did you hear what I said?" he cried, raising his voice unnecessarily. "Isn't the fellow in the kitchen? Have you sent him out again on some fool's errand just when I want him?"

As he spoke the door opened and Fritz appeared, standing at attention and saluting with grave decorum when his master addressed him as a stupid beast and told him to get a bath ready at once. Brenda sat down in an easy chair that she habitually used. On a table near her were some books and magazines, her work-basket, and a pot of pink tulips that Siegmund had brought her last week. On the dinner-table were the tea things, and Lothar noticed at once that four cups had been used.

"Who has been here?" he asked.

"Your mother and sisters."

"All three of them! Had they been invited? I had not been told."

"They came unexpectedly."

"Had they arranged with each other to meet here, then?"

"I did not ask them that."

Brenda wanted to act with dignity and wisdom, but she could not conceal the fact that she was troubled.

Her very reticence showed it and so did her face.

"Well!" said Lothar, getting up. "I'll say good night. I may be late."

"Good night!" said Brenda.

"What's it all about?" asked Lothar. "What have my mother and sisters been saying to you?"

On the spur of the moment Brenda decided to tell him. If she could have kept her knowledge from him she would probably have done so, but she knew that next time he met any of his family the affair would be brought forward and discussed in every key.

"They told me you were giving a supper party tonight in honor of Frau Prassler's birthday," she said.

"How did they ferret it out? Have you been opening my letters?"

"They came to ask me to supper. At least, Elsa is sending the car for me. It is time for me to go and get ready."

"Curse all female mischief-makers," roared Lothar. "Have I a right to ask my friends to supper or have I not? Answer me that!"

"I should say that you had not," replied Brenda. "We can't afford it."

"What we can afford is not your business. I am the judge of that, as I have often told you."

Brenda was the last woman in the world to deal effectually with a man like Lothar. She possessed none of the coarse fighting qualities necessary to worst him, and she felt degraded by a wrangle. Her nature was contemplative, peaceable and affectionate. Her strength lay in her candor and intelligence. She found happiness in books, flowers, music, in sane friendships, and in the little everyday events of life. Quarrels distressed her beyond measure, and it was easier to submit than to resist except when her sense of right and wrong was called into play. Since the day of her dinner party and of Frau Prassler's impertinent interference with her table, various small signs

had confirmed the impression she had received then: the impression of an intimacy that was hostile to her and had gone considerable length. Lothar was more difficult to please than he had ever been before, more surly and in a state of restlessness that she could read like an open book. He watched for letters and telegrams, he rushed to the 'phone himself, he stayed out for hours together when she knew he might have been at home. In fact, he hardly troubled to conceal his state of mind from his wife, and lately, in speaking of a woman notoriously neglected by her husband, he had taken the man's part.

"If a wife cannot hold her husband she deserves to lose him," he had said.

Brenda had not disputed the point. She knew by this time that their moral views were divergent, and that Lothar was in the world to enjoy himself to the best of his ability. She did not know what more she could say to-night about the supper party, because she had never yet spoken to him about his attachment to Frau Prassler. She shrank from an argument that could avail her nothing; for she felt sure that he would deny it and go his ways. But she felt weary and sick at heart, and it was without any idea of vexing him that she took a book from the table and opened it. To her horror and amazement he dashed forward, snatched it violently from her hands and hurled it across the room.

"Insolence I will not endure," he shouted.

Brenda felt so stunned by this onslaught that at first she said nothing.

"When I speak you will answer," screamed Lothar, and banged his fist on the table. "It is your usual trick, to treat me as if I were beneath your notice. I will show you that I am not."

"But I have nothing to say," answered Brenda. "You lay down the law and I listen. That is how you interpret our relationship, so why have any

arguments? Let us wish each other a pleasant evening and say no more about it."

"I forbid you to go to the Abels to-night," said Lothar. "I mark my displeasure in that way. Let the Jew know that I will not allow my wife and sister to intrigue against me behind my back."

When Lothar was annoyed with the Abels he always spoke of Siegmund as the Jew; and by this time Brenda knew that in her husband's family quarrels were noisy and of daily occurrence, but did not last. Next week Lothar would probably speak of Elsa with demonstrative affection, and ask the Jew his opinion of a new operatic star. Like a pack of children they were socially a pack of ill-mannered, bad-tempered children. But Brenda believed that if she defied Lothar and said she would go to the Abels to supper, he was capable of using physical force to prevent it. So, feeling in sympathy with those fabulous persons whom fate places in the power of giants as strong as they are tiresome and stupid, Brenda moved languidly across the room to ring the bell. She knew that it would be an infringement of his dignity to ask him to ring it for her.

"Will you 'phone to Elsa or shall I?" she asked.

"I will, and I shall tell her what I think," said Lothar.

Brenda did not want a fresh brawl or she would have reminded him that the telephone was close to the kitchen door and that anything he said could be heard by Fritz and the cook. However, after informing his sister in German that Brenda was staying at home by his desire, he went on in English and displayed a power of invective that did him credit as a linguist. Apparently Elsa said a few words, too, for the interview lasted some minutes, and when Lothar came into the room again he looked red in the face and angrier than ever. Brenda had picked up her Keats, the book he had thrown across the room,

straightened out the leaves and opened it at the Ode to a Nightingale.

"I have told Elsa that you are not going to them," said Lothar.

"Yes. I heard you."

"I explained that I allow no one to dictate to me what I am to do. I am a man."

"I heard all you said, but I didn't hear Elsa."

"Elsa said *Quatsch*. That is what a woman calls argument. I informed her that rudeness was not argument. Has Fritz made my bath ready?"

"He has not been in to say so."

"Why have you not been out to superintend him? A wife who has no consideration for her husband's comfort cannot be surprised if he seeks the society of those who know how to value him. Do not trouble yourself to get up, I beg. Why should you disturb yourself? I hear Fritz coming."

He clattered out of the room and Brenda heard him "washing" Fritz's head because the bath had taken so long. Then the bathroom door banged and peace descended upon the flat for twenty minutes. Brenda finished the Ode to a Nightingale.

> Magic casements, opening on the foam
> Of perilous seas, in faëry lands forlorn.

That always conjured up Treva and those moonlit nights when the sea broke in clouds of spray over the rocks, and she, arm in arm with dear Andrew Lovel, clambered close down to the water. She could see the quiet pools left in places at low tide, she could remember the delicious freshness of seaweed and the taste of salt on her lips. All the glamour of poetry was in heaven and in earth out there, and indoors the sane peace and order of civilized life. She had been terribly homesick lately. While Lothar's passion for her lasted, though she knew she had been crazy

to marry him, she felt at any rate that she had given him what he greatly desired; and a woman of Brenda's temperament finds some satisfaction in that. But now she neither gave nor received. His indifference to her became more marked as his infatuation for Frau Prassler grew deeper. He took no interest in her doings or pleasure in her companionship. Directly they were by themselves he was morose and bored, and if she wanted to keep him in a bearable humor she had to have some third person present; one of his fellow-officers for choice. She would have been glad to avoid the beautiful Jutta altogether, but found it impossible. Lothar constantly went to her house, and asked her to his, too. The day after the supper party he told Brenda that Prassler was back and that he and his wife would come to tea on Sunday. This one and that one might be asked to meet them, but none of the family should come. He had not forgiven them yet.

"Suppose they come unasked?" suggested Brenda.

"That we must risk," decided Lothar.

So what happened on Sunday annoyed him extremely. The room seemed to be full of uniforms and high harsh voices. The beautiful Jutta sat among them in a marvelous creation of velvet and sables, Lothar had just found a corner at his charmer's side, and all was going merry as a marriage bell, when the door opened and in walked August, Mina and their two potato-nosed children—the two elder ones, both boys. The whole family was dressed as their class does dress in Germany, and they were all visibly perturbed by the unexpected smart gathering at Lothar's house. Perturbed and affronted! For the Zorns belonged to that troublesome breed of people who are socially uncivilized themselves and resent civilization in others; and what can be more civilized than a combination of gray uniforms and sables? August was a professor certainly, but he was an unimportant

one; and since Mina, the ugly duckling of the family, had married him, her brother and sister had both climbed to rather higher spheres in Berlin society than they had been born to. The people in Lothar's salon this afternoon knew that grubby little professors existed, but they were not related to them, nor did their womenkind look as grotesque as Mina in her slate-colored *Reflormkleid,* cotton gloves, and a hat in the model of 1911 as big as a tea-tray. The boys were little objects, too, in cheap snuff-colored suits lavishly trimmed with braid. The beautiful Jutta had probably been in the same room with their parents before when she went to Elsa's large parties, but at large parties it is easy to avoid people. At any rate, she did not appear to know them and bowed frigidly when introduced.

"We did not know you had a party," said Mina. "Perhaps we ought not to have come."

"I hope that we are as welcome in your brother's house as we make him in ours on all occasions," said August.

Brenda did her best, gave August and Mina tea, stayed the children with cakes, talked to them all pleasantly and assured them that they had not driven the colonel away by their arrival. He doubtless had an engagement elsewhere.

"You say so, but the moment we sat down near him he got up," persisted August. "It was most marked. Was it not, wife?"

"Perhaps he doesn't like children," said Mina, offering her handkerchief to one of her own who badly required it, and rebuking the other because he was wiping his hands on Brenda's teacloth. This so flurried him that he jerked back his chair, and in doing so butted into the beautiful Jutta herself. Her cup of tea was nearly but not quite spilled over her velvet gown and some of it did spill into the saucer. With a little shriek of anger and surprise she put it

into the hands of the man nearest her and got up to go.

"You didn't tell me it was to be a children's party," she said to Brenda with an affected laugh.

"But you are not going," cried Lothar with unconcealed concern. "You have only just come."

"I'm afraid I really must," she said, and would not be persuaded. Her departure seemed to be a signal for every one else to go except the Zorns, who stayed on and on, not seeing apparently that Lothar could hardly contain his anger with them. Or did they see and stay in spite of it? Brenda hardly knew, for the working of their minds and the intricacies of their quarrels were difficult to follow.

"I hear your supper party was a great success," August said when at last he was about to leave.

"How did you hear it?" snapped Lothar.

"Our cook's brother is a waiter," said Mina simply.

Lothar shrugged his shoulders, bid his sister a curt good night and returned to the salon.

"You engineered this," he said to Brenda. "You arranged that the Zorns and their disgusting children should tumble in on us and spoil the afternoon."

"Do you really believe that?"

"Of course I believe it."

"I did not know they were coming."

"You lie."

Brenda knew that nothing angered her husband like contemptuous silence, and she did not wish to anger him. His outbursts of rage had physical effects on her that she dreaded for the sake of her child. That was why she had told him plainly that she had not known the Zorns were coming. But what more could she say when he went on to accuse her of lying? What can a truthful person say under such circumstances?

"Every one English lies," screamed Lothar.

Brenda turned from him disdainfully.

"I shall ask Mina whether you invited her. Mina is in the highest degree truthful, like all Germans. I wish I had married one."

"I wish you had," said Brenda, and miserable as she was, could have smiled because he looked quite taken aback.

"You mean that!" he exclaimed.

"Do you imagine that I am happy?"

"I don't think about it. Why should you not be happy? You are a married woman and have a good home. What more can a woman want?"

Brenda made no attempt to tell him, and after a few heated remarks about the unreasonableness of women he was obliged to leave her. He was on duty at the barracks that night and she did not see him again until the following day.

XV

THE child was to be a German. That was made plain to Brenda from the beginning. The stork was to be a German stork, the baby would live in a *Steckkissen* and be laboriously guarded from draughts. The nurse would come from the Spreewald and wear the picturesque costume that brings heavy laundry bills to its employers; and the little citizen's name would be either Wilhelm Gustav or Sophie Marie, after its grandparents. All these things were settled by the family in conclave with Lothar, who had restored himself to favor by the simple means of telling Brenda to order a large Braten and have the whole clamjamphrie to supper one night. A salmon mayonnaise in front of the Braten, an ice in the shape of a stork to follow and a few bottles of good Rhine wine put even August into a better humor than usual; and he proposed the health of Wilhelm Gustav without a single unpleasant allusion to the expected one's foreign mother. But after supper she put her foot into it by confessing when she was asked outright that as names none of the four chosen pleased her. She actually liked the English version of two of them better than the German. William and Mary were both fine names, she said; Gustav and Sophie she did not like.

"Then you have no taste," screamed the Erdmanns and the Zorns in chorus; "they are singularly distinguished. A person who cannot see that has no

taste. The English have no taste and no art and no literature. It is well known."

Brenda never argued with the family when it got epileptic about England. You cannot argue with the insane, and after living among Prussians for six months she knew that however level-headed they were in other ways they were a people possessed with regard to England. She still believed in the Germany she loved, for here and there she found it, among kindly people leading simple laborious lives. But they did not occupy the foreground. She detested the modern German foreground with its coarse efficiency, its brag, and its malevolence. So well informed all Germans were, so cultured, so superior to the rest of the world; and the rest of the world did not see it, but would soon be made to—especially England.

Then Brenda began to compare the two countries, and, as well as she could, pass judgment. Where did England . . . her England, fail and so deserve its impending doom? By the mass she could not tell, for of high politics she knew nothing and of economics not much. She saw that the poorer classes in Berlin were more tidily and sensibly clothed than in London; she saw that the streets were cleaner and that the restaurants gave you more for your money. She knew that you could get delightfully cheap seats at some theaters, and that as a rule neither love nor money would procure you seats for Wagner opera, but only tedious waiting in a queue on Sunday morning. She had seen "The Merchant of Venice" played in Berlin, and found that the superman took Portia not for a great lady but for a giggling minx, who kicked up her heels in the first act and was pert in the third. She understood that when summer came there would be open-air concerts in all the beer gardens and cheap trips by steamer to Potsdam. In fact, she understood that in some respects life in Berlin had the advantage of London; but she could not see

that it triumphed all along the line. In fact, she considered that in some ways England was ahead of Germany, though she knew it would be heresy to say so. She thought that London shops were more convenient and business-like; that English servants were more civilized; that Englishmen were handsomer and better dressed; that the English had pleasanter manners; that the educated people were less boastful and people of all classes more good-humored. All these conclusions were concerned with the commonplaces of experience, but the conviction that they were true was more and more borne in on her. The subtler differences between the nations, her new knowledge of the soul of Germany as compared with her lifelong knowledge of the English soul she could not have put into words at all, but sensed them like an aroma or a melody. What puzzled her was her own soul. As, after all, she was German by blood, and only English by birth and upbringing, why should every pulse of her heart beat for England with a singleness of affection that nothing could disturb or weaken? There was no doubt that it did and that she gave umbrage whenever she betrayed herself. She tried in vain to glide over difficult places, so as not to betray herself, but she found that with many Germans gliding was impossible. If you tried to slip away, a heavy hand recalled you.

"English people never wish to be Germans," said August resentfully.

"I suppose not," said Brenda, and asked after the children; but that did not help her.

"Why should you suppose not?" he asked. "Why should you insult the most civilized and progressive nation in the world by supposing that no one wants to belong to it. That is what we find so intolerable in the English. They give themselves airs, although their day is over. A nation of vagabonds who pretend to be something great! Rotten to the core! As you

have been educated in England . . . *educated* . . . God save the mark . . . of course you know no history . . . so you do not know that the whole Empire has been got together by robbery and murder and will fall to pieces at a touch. Your race is hated as no other race is hated, wherever it goes. Perhaps you do not know that either."

"I do not," said Brenda. "I never shall know it."

"Can't you hear what I say, then?"

As by this time he was sea-green with fury and bawling at the top of his disagreeable voice, Brenda could hear till her head ached and wondered whether the Empire would mind much if in order to stop him she gave it away.

"Take it," she said, holding out her empty hands.

"Take what?"

"The British Empire: all I have to give of it. Carry it to a corner as a tiger does a bone. Tear it. Bite it. Scream from the housetops that you hate it. Ask heaven for lightning and see what happens."

"Are you crazy?"

"I don't think so. But I'm sick and tired. We have a saying about curses coming home to roost. Have you ever heard it?"

"Of course I have heard it," said August, and asked his wife what Brenda was talking about, and whether perhaps she was feverish.

But wherever Brenda went she came across August's opinions more or less openly expressed. England was the enemy. England possessed, but was too decadent to keep, what Germany rightfully wanted. English people must not be told plainly that the German sword hung over them, because before long they were to be caught napping. But supermen appointed by the Almighty to scourge them could not always keep their intentions hidden.

Sometimes Brenda laughed, sometimes she grew angry, often she wished that she could convey her

impressions of the national mood to English people; but when, for instance, she thought of explaining August to the Lovels of Treva her imagination refused to work. The Lovels would never believe that here in Berlin whole tribes of unconsidered Germans were boiling over with hatred of them. They were not boiling over with hatred of Lothar in his uniform and August raving in his chair. They would have seen that Lothar was a smart, personable officer, faithful to his duty but distastefully arrogant. Then they would have thought no more about him. As for August, you could not conceive that such an offensive worm had ever come across their path.

If he had they would have used a pouncet-box and passed him by. Was it here that England's danger lay? In its blindness to the sharpened sword and its indifference to venomous worms? Or was the sword of Britain rusty and the lion become a sheep, bleating about the easily hurt feelings of a great friendly nation? In no single instance did Brenda find friendliness in Germany towards England, although in many cases people treated her kindly, explaining always in the tactful German way that they had no quarrel with English individuals, but only with English politics and manners. As for proffers of friendship from England, Brenda heard them openly spoken of with cynical disdain. They were taken for signs of fear.

For her child's sake Brenda tried to live in an atmosphere of her own and avoid all those who broke her peace. She read a great deal and put much fine stitching and delicate embroidery into little garments. She tended the indoor palms the family had given her at Christmas, and when she walked as far as the Thiergarten she watched longingly for spring. Lothar was constantly out, and as she believed, dancing attendance on Frau Prassler. She wondered if Major Prassler felt as lonely as she did, and what he thought

of the affair. It had become an "affair." Brenda saw it in the eyes of her friends and heard it in hostile innuendoes. She herself was pitied by some and derided by others. The family blamed her because, they argued, a woman is not deserted by her husband unless she has been either stupid or disagreeable. Any man will stray if he is not cleverly shepherded, said Little Mamma. From the first Brenda refused to discuss Lothar with his family, thereby offending them mortally. She was very unhappy as regards her husband, but full of tender hopes as regards her child; that little citizen who might conceivably perform a miracle and bring his father and mother together again. Brenda thought she knew the best and worst of Lothar by this time, and as marriage lasts for life she meant to fulfill her part in the covenant as well as she could. He was not the man of her dreams, but he was the man she had married, and by his side she must dree her weird. A separation, or, worse still, divorce, had never entered her head as possible. The little citizen put that outside the range of thought.

But life is difficult beside a man who openly courts another woman, hangs upon her words, seeks her company, and brings her as much as possible into his house. Even if the beautiful Jutta had been a lovable, warm-hearted woman, the spectacle of Lothar's infatuation for her must necessarily have frozen his wife. But Jutta was not lovable or warm-hearted, or even well bred. She was smart with a German smartness, that is not a thing in itself but aped from Paris and Vienna. Her arrogance reached a pitch that has to be seen in its native setting to be believed. She had a way of sawing the air with her hand as she laid down the law that Brenda had read of in old-fashioned novels, but never expected to see in real life. You could not argue with her. You were not permitted to speak even when you knew that she was

wrong: as, for instance, when she said that no one in England read Shakespeare now because every one there was too ignorant to understand his archaic English. She added on this occasion that she disagreed with her country-people who all greatly preferred the German translation to the original, and that when she went to a Shakespeare play herself she usually read the English version either before or after. "But you are so *geistreich,* and have had such a brilliant education," murmured Lothar. Like every one Brenda met in Berlin, she hated the English and displayed the puzzling blend of information and ignorance that makes the average German right in his facts and wrong in his judgments. Compared with Brenda, she knew nothing of literature and music, but she started from the point all Germans start from, and maintained that in England literature hardly exists and music is unknown. She had never been in England or associated with English people, but she had seen them in Italy and Switzerland. They behaved as if they owned the world, dressed atrociously, got hot over games and kept to themselves. They were an effete race, swollen with pride and greed, doomed to destruction.

"I really do wonder what would happen if I told some of these people what I thought of Germany," Brenda said to Lothar one day. "You all take for granted that you are the salt of the earth, but I have my doubts. You are very efficient and prosperous, but where are your souls?"

"We don't believe in souls," said Lothar. "You have to admit that we are efficient and prosperous. Some day you will discover how formidable we are. We shall leave you your souls; any of you whose bodies survive. We shall not leave you anything else."

"You seem to think that we shall have no power of resistance."

"We are not so foolish. We know the exact measure of your power and are not afraid of it. We mean to be top dog. England stands in our way and must be crushed. It is as simple as the multiplication table."

"England has never been crushed."

"She has never been attacked by Germany."

"I constantly meet people who say that you have no designs on us, and that your navy is built to protect your mercantile marine."

"Our navy is built to crush your navy. When the day comes, with the help of our aircraft we shall do it."

It all sounded like bombast, and yet it troubled Brenda because the longer she lived in Germany the more she learned to believe that the whole nation was being led and trained towards this one idea. Underneath the silly explosions of jealousy and hate there was a sinister intention that the great qualities of the people, their method, industry and brain power were all to serve at the appointed time. Then she thought of England, dearly loved, generous and unsuspicious of evil. It would not be warned. It would not be ready. It would pay an awful price in blood and tears. She began to write home of what she heard in Berlin, but they wrote back of troubles in Ireland and about the crazy doings of the militant suffragettes. In May Mrs. Müller was coming to Berlin, and she wrote in March of summer plans. If they took a house at Cromer, would Lothar, Brenda and the little citizen all come over for August and stay with them? The house in question must be taken at Easter, and would be too big for them unless Lothar and Brenda came. But Brenda could not get Lothar to make plans so long beforehand. He said that he would probably be going to England in June on service business and that he did not know whether he could get leave in August.

So life went on through the early spring, slowly and

heavily. Lothar was very little at home, and when he was did not make himself agreeable. According to his temper Brenda could give a good guess at Jutta's treatment of him. She judged her rival to be one of those self-centered cold coquettes who will go great lengths to enslave a man, but wish to remain on the safe side socially. Lothar had had many predecessors, and though there had been gossip there had been no public scandal. Brenda, who had grown up among estimable, rather humdrum people, had never met any one before who seemed to ensnare men like a courtesan and yet keep her place as a matron. She was not ensnared herself, so she saw the beautiful Jutta for what she was, a vain, shallow woman who wore bizarre, gorgeous clothes, had dimly-lighted luxurious rooms, and though she talked like a pedant made eyes like a hussy. One night when much against her will Brenda had been obliged to sup at her house, she say Jutta and Lothar sitting together in the small inner room opening out of the large salon. Jutta lay on a divan all gold and vivid purple, her oyster-white gown was nearly as tight as a serpent's skin, and so transparent that at supper Brenda had felt uncomfortable when her eyes fell on it. Perhaps her eyes betrayed her. At any rate, Jutta's catlike glance showed fury when it fell on Brenda, and from that night she grappled Lothar to her more closely than ever. Nor was she content unless his wife was witness of her power over him. She would make any excuse to inflict her presence on Brenda, although she must have seen that she was unwelcome. The sound of her voice, the swing of her body, the scent she used, the falseness of her smile, anything and everything about her so wrought on Brenda that it became a torture to be in the same room with this woman, but she was spared no meeting and no humiliation that Jutta could bring about. Every effort that Brenda made to avoid her led to such violent

scenes with Lothar that it became easier to endure than to resist. One night early in March when winter had come back to northern Germany with driving snowstorms, frost and ice, she found herself in a theater, although she had begged Lothar to let her stay at home. But Jutta had taken a box on purpose for her, a roomy retired box where Brenda could sit almost unseen; and the play was a new one by a new writer. The whole city was rushing to see it because it outdid Wedekind himself in bestiality. That Brenda shuddered at the thought of seeing it only proved that she was narrow and wanting in Kultur. The play was the last word in the *macabre,* said Jutta, a crescendo of blood, lust and cruelty. The very children in it were wantons, and the men and women maniacs. You shuddered, but you enjoyed; for the psychology was subtle and the language highly poetical.

"I have seen it three times," said Jutta, gloating.

"I would rather not see it at all," said Brenda, and when Jutta had gone she tried to explain to Lothar that horrors were not good for the little citizen. But he only said that her arguments were *Frauengeschwätz,* and that it would offend Frau Prassler deeply if she stayed away.

That was what constantly happened, Brenda found. Under the guise of kindness Jutta did her a bad turn, and with honeyed epithets she said things that rankled and made mischief. Outwardly she was the attentive friend, bringing gifts and invitations; but inwardly she hated Brenda because she was injuring her and because Brenda would not kneel at her shrine. She was trying to take everything from the wife and yet of the two women she was the more angry and dissatisfied. For in a sense Brenda could only be vanquished superficially. She was ill in body and troubled in spirit, but she kept alive within her the soul that showed in her tranquil eyes. The horrible

play sickened her with its falsity to life and its searchlights thrown over an obscene underworld not guessed at by the sane. The author was not a Satan but just a *Schmutzfink* who knew his public. When in the last act a character called Dr. Crippen, made up in a livid face and Victorian whiskers, jumped through a window on to the stage and murdered a wanton just enjoying an epileptic fit, Jutta breathed in sighs and murmured to Lothar that this was genius; but Brenda laughed, because if she had not laughed she would have cried to think that any people in the world were silly and depraved enough to applaud such drivel.

"In London the censor would forbid this play," said Jutta, looking annoyed.

"No doubt," said Brenda.

"Yet you call yourself a free people. Freedom of thought is unknown amongst you."

Brenda allowed Major Prassler, who made one of their party, to help her on with her fur coat, while Lothar hung over Jutta, trying to discover the sleeves of an elaborate black and gold creation trimmed with peltry. You inevitably thought in fashion-article English when you looked at Jutta's clothes, and could imagine her wearing a hat decorated with *légumes* that on any one else's head you would have called vegetables.

"I would also remind you that Dr. Crippen was an Englishman," said Jutta as they left the box. "You censor a play about crimes that you commit. I prefer our German freedom and honesty."

"I like to laugh at comedy and be thrilled by tragedy," observed Brenda, who did not dare to say that in a seaside place where they had spent a summer holiday she had actually heard of a play about Dr. Crippen given in a barn by a troupe of strolling players. Some of the servants had gone to it. But it had probably been innocent low-life melodrama compared with that she had just seen.

Jutta did not answer her because she had gone on ahead with Lothar. When they all emerged from the theater they stood at the top of a tall flight of steps slippery with half-frozen snow. The storm was increasing, the wind howled past them, driving the snow aslant before it. The crowd either fled through it or scurried into cars and taxis. The gendarmes on duty were powdered with snow, and the whole open square was heaped with it. Major Prassler had ordered his car to fetch them, but though he went to look for it he did not reappear. Jutta, whose temper had been abominable the whole evening, seemed to Brenda to lose the last vestige of self-control. The cold and the driving storm were more than she could bear, and she saw that the theater doors were about to be closed behind them. With a sudden exclamation of impatience she gathered up her skirts and called to Lothar to follow her and find a taxi.

Of Brenda, who stood close to her, she took no notice at all. But as she turned to Lothar she slipped slightly, recovered herself at once, and in doing so pushed against Brenda, who was taken by surprise. Brenda tried desperately to right herself, but failed, and fell headlong down the half-frozen flight of steps. Gendarmes went to her help. She did not lose consciousness at first, but looked round for Lothar when she was helped up. He had disappeared with Jutta in the darkness, and she could imagine that amidst the noise of the storm and the flurry of the crowd he had neither seen her fall nor heard her cry. Strangers helped her home and that night the little citizen who was to be a German came into the world, but after drawing a feeble breath departed again.

XVI

LITTLE Mamma was offended! So was Mina! So above all was August, the learned cackling August, who had raised his voice outside the sick-room and had been requested to lower it because Brenda, after great suffering, had fallen asleep. The impertinence of the woman from London now usurping a position of authority in a good German house! Her daring! Her offensive silences! Her still more offensive remarks! Her deeds! Her money! August's teeth actually grated on each other when he talked of Mrs. Müller's money and her shameless way of using it.

She had brought a trained nurse with her in case she should be wanted; and she was wanted. English intrigue again! The worthy Frau Henning had been clean enough and quiet enough for Mina. Why not for Brenda, then? It was not Frau Henning's fault if Brenda had been found at death's door in a carefully curtained room, lost to the real world and wandering crazily in one all pain. Frau Henning said she left everything in God's hands and fell asleep on the sofa, having supped heartily. The good honest Frau Henning! August danced with rage when he heard of the way in which Mrs. Müller had summarily bundled her out of the house and installed the frigid automaton who would allow no stranger in her patient's room and looked at August as if he was an insect of no importance.

"I am Herr Professor Zorn," he said, puffing out

the organ he fed so carefully and generously four times a day.

"I'll tell Mrs. Müller you called," said the nurse, who had been summoned by the pearl.

"I have come to see my sister-in-law," he said. "I wish to judge for myself whether she is ill or merely giving way to nerves."

"Are you a doctor?"

"What has that to do with it? A lay eye sometimes sees more than an initiated one."

"Mrs. Erdmann can't see any one yet."

It was at this moment that August began to bawl, and Mrs. Müller, coming out of the dining-room, requested him to lower his voice. They had not met before, and in two minutes Mrs. Müller hoped they need never meet again. She did not know much about professors, and the titles on the card he presented to introduce himself impressed her less than his harsh voice and obvious want of manners. However, she took him into the dining-room, and as they sat down she told him that Brenda was seriously ill.

"I am not surprised to hear it," said August.

"No one can be surprised, considering what happened," said Mrs. Müller.

"What happened was accidental. I am thinking of causes further back. Ever since your daughter came amongst us she has been ailing and depressed. A young wife about to become a mother has no right to be depressed. It is her duty to be cheerful. But no doubt Brenda's constitution was undermined before marriage by athletics and luxury."

Mrs. Müller's shrewd eyes took August's measure, and her attention fixed itself on what he told her about her child; for Brenda's letters had told her nothing positive. They had betrayed more by what they left out than by what they said; and if the Müllers were uneasy they told each other they had nothing but their suspicions to go on.

"I can understand that Brenda was ailing, but why was she depressed?" Mrs. Müller said to August. "She never was at home."

"It would be better for every one concerned if she had stayed at home."

"I wish she had! Neither her father nor I desired the marriage."

"On what grounds?" cried August, beginning to bristle at once. "Is a German officer not good enough for any young woman whose father is in trade? We have different ideas here, I can assure you."

"Why was Brenda depressed?"

"Why is any one depressed? Such a question has no sense. When I am depressed it is either because my food has not agreed with me or because something has gone wrong with my affairs."

"What had gone wrong with Brenda's affairs? I cannot suppose that her food . . ."

"I am not going to be drawn into any *Frauenklatscherei,*" interrupted August. "My dignity forbids it. If you want to know what has happened, ask the other women of the family. None of them approved of Brenda, but she was there and they tried to make the best of it."

"Why did none of them approve of Brenda?"

"My dear Frau Müller! After all your name is German, your blood is German. Your parents were born in Berlin and your husband is a Heidelberger. You must know that the standard reached by our women is the highest in the world, and that Brenda with her miserable English education and ignorance of all a woman should understand, fails to touch it at any point. This can neither be hidden nor denied. To attempt to do either would be simply impudent."

Mrs. Müller looked at August. She did not answer him, she did not smile, she did not grow angry. This, you see, was one of her supercilious silences that he could only meet by continuing to rave. But even an

August finds it difficult to go on raving when his audience is as irresponsive as a wise, elderly dog to a spitting cat.

"You must bring Mina to see me," Mrs. Müller said after a time, and then she got up, dismissing him, Professor August Zorn, a man, a scholar. Damned old Englishwoman!

"But I told her she was a German," he said to his wife. "I rubbed it in. That annoyed her!"

August's visit was only one link in a long chain of evidence showing Mrs. Müller that her daughter had not been kindly treated by Lothar's family and that Lothar himself had not behaved well to his wife. Little things and big things told her the same story.

"I cannot understand why Brenda chose these hideous papers and carpets," she said one rainy day when the brown snakes in the dining-room looked dingier and gloomier than usual.

"Brenda did not choose them," said Lothar. "When we arrived we found our home ready for us to the last nail. Do you mean to say that Brenda did not tell you this in her letters?"

"I remember her saying that she found the flat in order and the dinner on the table. She did not tell us what it was like. She always wrote cheerfully."

"How else should she have written? She was saved all trouble and fatigue by the devotion of my mother and sisters. But at the time she was not pleased. She even wished to do some things over again in a different way."

"She would have different ideas, you see," said Mrs. Müller. "In England . . ."

"What you do in England cannot set the fashion in Berlin. My mother and sisters have experience and know how to combine the most refined taste with economy. Besides, the color of a wall is indifferent to me."

"You are not much at home, perhaps?"

"That is what I say. I am so little at home that I do not care whether my walls are brown, blue or scarlet. I leave such matters to women."

"Your drawing-room looks as if it was never used," said Mrs. Müller.

"It is only used when we entertain."

"Doesn't Brenda make a living-room of it?"

"Certainly not. Why should we light two stoves when one will do?"

Mrs. Müller asked no more questions just then. She had taken the housekeeping into her own hands and had engaged two capable servants in place of the pearl she had found howling in a dirty kitchen because a mistress at the point of death upset her nerves. Mrs. Müller had seen directly she arrived that she would be needed for some time if Brenda lived, and she had settled down for a prolonged stay with a son-in-law who began by looking frosty and morose, but soon melted a little because when he ate at home she made him colossally comfortable.

"If only Brenda knew how to cater for a man as you do," he said one day after a meal of satisfying excellence.

Mrs. Müller did not tell Lothar at the time that she was paying for most things herself, and that the housekeeping allowance he put down every week was insufficient. She did not understand yet why Brenda had not run the house on more liberal lines, and contributed what was necessary out of her own pocket. Whenever she saw the Erdmanns and the Zorns she heard sour-sweet allusions to Brenda's inefficiency, and in the house she came across various signs of stint and make-shift that should have been unnecessary. However, she could ask Brenda no questions yet.

Lothar had not been there when his wife had been carried home by strangers after her headlong fall down the steep flight of slippery steps. His thoughts and his attention had all been given to Frau Prassler, they

had met Major Prassler directly they moved away and all three had gone straight to the restaurant where they had arranged to sup. Major Prassler had made a short perfunctory search for Brenda, but he was not a man to hang about in a winter storm, looking for a silly woman who could not stay with her own party.

"I know exactly what she has done," Lothar said. "She has called a taxi and gone home by herself. She has those independent ideas sometimes."

"Very inconsiderate," said Jutta. "She might have reflected that we should be anxious about her."

"It is not only inconsiderate, but it is impolite," said Major Prassler. "I, as her host, feel that side of it."

Lothar stifled any sense of uneasiness that might have interfered with his supper by nursing his marital anger. When he got home he would certainly rebuke Brenda for her want of manners and of deference to his wishes. Even if she had not felt very well she should have consulted him before flying off home by herself.

But when he got home he found a wife in labor, a doctor as grave as a judge, the pearl in hysterics, a fool of a nurse and Little Mamma insisting that Brenda's mother must be summoned at once. If Elsa or Mina had ever been in the same condition, which was unthinkable, she would have called down fire from heaven on the heads of those who kept her from her child. Little Mamma said other things that annoyed Lothar exceedingly. She blamed him both for taking Brenda to the theater and for allowing her to fall.

"The first reproach I accept. The second is ridiculous," said Lothar. "How could I have prevented her from falling?"

"By attending to her instead of to another woman," said Little Mamma.

So Mrs. Müller came to a family divided against itself, and so far as Brenda was concerned untender.

She could not see that any one except Siegmund Abel had much affection for her daughter, Lothar perhaps least of all. He clattered in and out of the house, gave his orders in his usual harsh nasal voice, asked perfunctorily after his wife, lost his temper when the least thing disturbed his comfort, and kept late hours. Mrs. Müller liked some of Brenda's friends much better than her relations, but she could not discover that any of those she saw were intimate in the house. One afternoon, when Elsa Abel was present, the beautiful Jutta appeared, bringing with her the reek of scent and the suggestion of a world in which there was neither trouble nor pain. She was dressed in the height of the fashion, and her feline eyes appraised what Mrs. Müller and Elsa wore as she sat down to talk to them. She brought with her half a dozen wired roses tied with ribbon.

"How is our dear patient?" she asked, and Mrs. Müller thought she had never heard a voice so hard and metallic.

"I suppose Lothar tells you how she is every day, or doesn't he trouble to speak of his wife?" said Elsa, to Mrs. Müller's amazement.

"I am sure that your brother is devoted to his little wife," said Jutta, "quite devoted. Naturally it has been a sad disappointment to him . . ."

She sighed and delicately paused. Elsa gave a sort of snort and asked how late the dancing had been kept up at Toni Lieber's *Polterabend* and whether it was true that some Americans had given an exhibition of the scandalous dances that were the rage in London just now and were going to do them again at Jutta's house to-night. Jutta replied that if they were scandalous her dear Elsa could rest assured that they would not be permitted at her house, and this caused Elsa to snort again. Then Jutta got up to go.

"I merely called to inquire and to bring a few flowers," she said, leaving her roses on the table.

"Siegmund sends Brenda flowers every day," said Elsa. "He adores her and doesn't care what he spends on her, and he is acquainted with her tastes, which are highly fastidious. Wired flowers cause her to shudder, and in her present state might bring on a relapse."

"It is most kind of you to bring them and I will give them to Brenda at once," said Mrs. Müller hurriedly, for she was not behind the scenes and was not used to onslaughts of this primitive and determined description.

"When you see an adder, stamp on it," counseled Elsa directly the door had closed. "She won't come again in a hurry."

"But why should you think she sees Lothar every day? Surely his work does not bring them together?"

"Not his work, but his pleasure," said Elsa gloomily. "She is a notorious coquette and Lothar is a fool."

Mrs. Müller grew more and more uneasy about her child's marriage, but she said nothing to Brenda for some time. She had been in Berlin five or six weeks, and May had come before she tried to find out what Elsa had meant. Brenda hardly ever spoke of her present life at all. Her thoughts seemed to turn to her old home and to the people she had known there; and she took more interest in anything that Mrs. Müller could tell her about Treva than in the chronicles brought by Lothar's family of what had happened to acquaintances in Berlin.

"Have you made many friends here?" her mother asked one day.

"A few. I love Siegmund Abel and I get on with Elsa now. There are others, too. When I am stronger I will ask some of them to meet you."

"A Frau Prassler called when you were ill. I did not tell you at the time."

"She is not a friend," said Brenda. Her face seemed to stiffen, and after a moment's hesitation she added:

"Lothar is in love with her."

Mrs. Müller had wished for her daughter's confidence, but now that it was given she felt immeasurably distressed.

"Elsa says she is a notorious coquette," she answered with embarrassment.

"Elsa has told you then. The whole family know about it and disapprove."

"She did not tell me much."

"I can't, either. It would be a record of small slights and annoyances that mount up till they make one unhappy. But I don't see what one can do."

"Have you spoken to Lothar about it?"

"He knows that I have eyes."

"He might be made to feel that he is doing wrong."

"He will not stop for that. His own people reproach him, but they do no good. Words won't kill an infatuation."

"I suppose it is a mere flirtation," said Mrs. Müller after a reflective pause.

"I've no idea. It is an obsession at any rate."

"These affairs die out," said Mrs. Müller. "If the woman is a coquette she will pass on to some one else."

"What did you think of her?"

"I thought she was odious. Artificial and conceited. But one knows that some men are attracted by that kind of woman. What is her husband like?"

"Stolid and coarse and big. He married her for her money."

"When you are strong enough you ought to have a change," said Mrs. Müller. "Perhaps if you and Lothar went away together for a time . . . Could he get leave?"

"I would much rather come home with you," said Brenda.

Mrs. Müller looked startled and showed it.

"You mean for a short time," she said. "You would come back."

"I must speak to Lothar," said Brenda, and when he came in shortly before supper she took her opportunity.

It was now the middle of May, nearly two months since Brenda had been taken ill. She still looked frail, but her beauty had come back, and when Lothar entered the room he saw his wife as he had seen her in the early days of their marriage; and his eyes rested on her as they used to do, with a proprietary satisfaction that she noted and, thinking of Jutta, would have been glad to avoid.

"How much longer is your mother staying?" he said abruptly.

"She goes next week," said Brenda.

"I shall be glad to have our house to ourselves again."

Brenda put down her book and met her husband's eyes; but she could not know how far the picture she made affected Lothar's mood and gave the argument a turn she had not foreseen and did not desire. The weather had turned warm and she wore a thin white embroidered gown that was as fresh as a daisy. Mrs. Müller had brought in some lilies of the valley and put them in a Venetian glass by her daughter's side. The setting sun shone on Brenda's hair, burnishing the golden-red threads in it and flooding the wall behind her with light. Her convalescence had rested her and she looked younger than her years.

"I should like to go back with my mother," she said.

"To London! Now! What for? I cannot go with you at present."

"It would be a change."

"It will be a change to be by ourselves again, with you restored to health. I want no other."

"It is I who want it," said Brenda.

"A wife's place is with her husband. You will stay here," said Lothar.

"You never try to take my point of view, Lothar. I want to get away for a time."

"Away from what?"

"Everything! Everybody!"

"That is an extraordinary sentiment for a married woman to express."

"It follows from what has happened."

"What do you mean?"

"I've been very unhappy."

"You've been ill. There is no reason why you should be unhappy. You expect too much. A sensible woman shuts her eyes sometimes."

"Certainly; and when her husband returns to her because she looks prettier than ever she opens them again."

It was as the morality of the coarser kind of farce at which you laugh as long as the circumstances amidst which you hear it put forth are sufficiently unreal. But Brenda shuddered a little and felt ominously irresponsive.

"I must think things over," she said.

Lothar stared at his wife. She had never complained, never quarreled with him, never shown except by her silence that she resented his behavior. What then did she mean by this sudden assertion of herself? As if after he had pointed out what she was to do there could be any question of her doing something different! Had her illness affected her wits? Who could understand feminine vagaries or deal with them? He only knew of one way, and took it instantly.

"There is nothing to think over," he roared. "Nothing at all. You will not go to London. You will stay here and look after your husband and your house. What do you suppose would become of me if you ran about the world as you pleased? That is not our idea of married life."

"You promised me when we married that I should spend some weeks every year with my parents."

"I don't remember it."

"I do, distinctly."

"What one says before marriage is not what one says after. In the ardor of courtship man will make promises it would be inconvenient to keep later on."

"Then you don't consider yourself bound by your word?"

"Not to a woman. All men lie to women. Besides, what proof have you that I ever promised you an annual visit to England? It sounds unlikely."

"All men do not lie to women," said Brenda.

"There are lies and lies. Some are harmless and necessary. When I asked you to marry me, I would have promised you the moon if you had shown the least desire for it."

"My mother thinks I ought to have a change," said Brenda, looking away from Lothar because his eyes seemed ready to promise her the moon at this moment, provided she gave up her wish to go to London.

"This is out of the question. I could not get leave at present. We shall stay here together. You do not need a change. I have not seen you look as well and as pretty as you do to-day since we met in Heidelberg a year ago."

XVII

THEY were the only English people in the hotel, and though they had been in St. Peter for a fortnight they still made a little party to themselves. The husband and wife were called Müller and the young woman with them was called Erdmann. Yet they were English. Every one in the hotel could see it by their manners and clothes, and could hear it in their voices and imperfect German. The unmarried man with them was called Lovel, and both he and the man called Müller had the insufferable English air that makes supermen gobble with anger and dislike—the air of caring for nobody and not minding much if nobody cares for them. They encompassed their womenfolk with little observances that supermen consider beneath male dignity, and the women were on terms of happy equality with them, accepting their services and sharing in their discussions. They had a table to themselves in the *Speise-Saal,* but it was a table that could be watched by the rest of the room, and at first the relationships of the four new guests afforded matter of speculation. Except at meals they were hardly seen. Whenever it was fine they went off for the whole day together, thus missing the one o'clock meal, which was the biggest and most satisfying. Their indifference to it would have proclaimed their nationality if nothing else had done so. They took sandwiches with them, the landlord informed inquirers. Sandwiches! To feed a man who since his supper the night before had had nothing but coffee and rolls!

"But how is it that you are called Müller?" said a determined woman to Jem when she caught him unprotected one day.

"I am called Müller because my father is Müller," said Jem.

"But Müller is a German name."

"My father is German."

"But you are not!"

"I'm English . . . or Chinese. I was born in Hongkong."

"Strange! And your sister?"

"She is English, too."

"But she is called Erdmann."

"Because she married a man of that name."

"He is not here."

"He is in Berlin with his regiment."

"An officer?"

"Yes."

"You said a man! I thought perhaps . . ."

"I will tell you our whole story since it interests you," said Jem. "I am English, my wife is English, my sister is English, and my friend, Mr. Lovel, is English. There isn't a German amongst us. We have come here to see the Black Forest and we are enjoying ourselves immensely. The only drawback to our happiness is that something has gone wrong with the post. We have had no English letters and papers to-day."

"It must be the fault of the English post," said the woman. "Ours is so perfectly organized that there is never a hitch."

Just then Jem caught sight of his party and was able to escape with a polite remark about the weather. But he told Violet that in future she must protect him more carefully from females who wore *Reformkleider* and weighed more than he did.

"She is angry because we are not Germans," he said to Brenda.

"And the angrier they are the less we want to be," said Brenda.

She had been in St. Peter a fortnight, the guest of her brother, and she had been as happy as Peter Ibbetson was when in his prison cell he slept and dreamed. Presently the dream would end and she would wake again to the tormented life, the sordid squabbling life that her marriage made a wretched reality. Jem had sent her a sudden invitation, and Lothar had permitted her to accept it. The idea that sometime during the summer a woman who has been ill must do a "cure" at a watering-place is so inbred in German life that even tyrannical husbands like Lothar accept it; and here was an opportunity for a cure without its attendant expenses.

So Brenda set off by herself in a state of exhilaration she tried in vain to control and call absurd. To be with Jem and Violet all day for three long summer weeks! to see Andrew Lovel again! to hear English again! not to be bullied! not to be disliked! not to hear the everlasting bray of the German trumpet! Besides, the Black Forest was South Germany, as different from Berlin as Treva from Manchester. Not that Manchester resembled Berlin. As far as she knew, both cities would have resented comparison. She would have liked to go to Heidelberg, but dear grandmamma and great-grandmamma had died this spring within a few weeks of each other. The old-fashioned house and the Garden of the Hesperides were in strange hands. Brenda's father had sent her a necklace of seed pearls and some china as mementoes of them. He had supported them for many years and they left no property except their furniture and personal possessions.

"Very disappointing," said Lothar when he heard this. "I thought they were people of substance and that you would inherit from them."

Brenda expected to find her friends full of the Irish

trouble. In Berlin every one told her that England was on the eve of civil war, that the army had mutinied and that the labor world was ripe for a bloody revolution. The whole Empire was rotten, said August. When she saw an English paper she felt anxious about the unrest at home herself. But when she got to St. Peter she saw no papers except the weekly edition of "The Times" and she did not read that assiduously. Jem and Andrew did not talk politics at all. They talked maps and expeditions in the evening, and by day they were on the road or in the forest. Andrew had come home because Major Lovel needed him at Treva and had taken a chance of selling his New Zealand property at a huge profit. The nephew had managed the transaction and the uncle was well pleased with him. Violet told Brenda this, but added that Andrew wanted to go back to New Zealand. At the Rectory everything went on as usual and Mr. and Mrs. Lovel were both well. In Avenue Road everything was as usual, too, and in August Mr. and Mrs. Müller were going to Cromer. They had Jem's children with them at present and had invited the whole family to Cromer later on. Affairs in Ireland certainly looked serious. Trouble seemed to be brewing in Serbia, too, and Paris was in a ferment about the Caillaux trial. It was a relief to get away from papers for a while and Jem said he would not mind if he did not see one during his holiday.

Brenda guessed before long that Jem and Violet had come to Germany on purpose to see her and that they had no illusions about her marriage. She guessed it partly from their silences. They never spoke of Lothar. But Andrew Lovel, who knew less than they did, was less discreet.

"How do you like living in Berlin?" he asked her one day when they sat down in the forest to wait for the others.

"I don't like it," said Brenda. "I'm homesick."

"Don't you go home now and again?"

"I've not been once yet."

"Are the people pleasant?"

"Some are. Some are odious."

"Can't you avoid them?"

"Not always."

Brenda looked at Andrew Lovel with the same thought in her mind that had given her pause before. How could she explain August to him or the beautiful Jutta or Little Mamma? They were types outside his ken.

"I'd like to come home," she said. "I want to see my father and mother. I'd love to see Treva again."

"I wish you'd come," said Andrew.

"This is my holiday. I can't expect another."

She was wrestling with herself as she spoke. She had been wrestling with herself ever since she saw Andrew Lovel again, and yet she had not driven out that which her conscience condemned, but seemed unable to destroy. She had loved Andrew when he was immature and young for his years, and now that he had found himself she loved him more than ever, though she was a married woman. Consider what that means to a woman of Brenda's character and upbringing. The joy was stolen and the distress was greater than the joy. To be with him made her exquisitely happy, and that in itself frightened her. Every morning she resolved on a day of serene lighthearted contentment and every night she knew that she had not been serene but in extremes of bliss and trouble. She had no doubts about the situation and she was sure that Andrew had none. When love and duty come to the grapple, love must give way. You do not reason about it. You know it is so even if it kills you. Brenda had seen and read the modern drama in four tongues, but she supposed she was compounded of different stuff from those interesting heroes and heroines who are overcome by amorous

passion as a child is overcome by a fit of naughtiness. She did not even hold that Lothar's unfaithfulness could condone hers. His infatuation for the beautiful Jutta was a humiliation of her wifehood; it pulled down the poor scaffolding around their marriage and left it a ruin for every one to see. But it did nothing to exonerate her when she looked at Andrew and wished they could go to New Zealand together or die and find themselves together on a star. Her holiday had become a time of mingled happiness and torture; and in the same hour she would think of its end with relief and despair.

Andrew had been told enough of Brenda's marriage to know that it was not a happy one, and if he had been told nothing he would have guessed it. Her eyes showed that she had suffered, and her manner had changed, too. To go from friendly surroundings to bitterly hostile ones leaves its mark at all times, and Brenda had gone alone, a stranger within gates that had no welcome, an alien among people blown with wrath and pride. Even when she thought of those who had been friendly to her in Berlin it did not affect her belief in the universal grudge against England, inculcated for years and ready to burst into fury at the word of command. She thought that Violet, Jem and Andrew were typical of English blindness and indifference. They were enjoying their holiday, they delighted in the forest, they praised the food, they would tramp to a village church feast in order to see the peasants in costume. They paid lavishly for everything, found those who served them civil and assiduous and never dreamed what a volcano of hate was smothering its fires under this thin crust of peace and good will.

On the first of August Brenda went into the *Speise-Saal* and took her place at the table her party always occupied. It was pleasantly placed close to a window which they usually kept open in spite of some looks

and innuendoes from an apoplectic-looking Herr Worms, who sat beyond them with his wife and children. The night before this person had behaved with conspicuous rudeness, and Brenda, who was used to August, did not marvel so much at his want of manners as at the wave of sympathy with him that rippled through the room among people who ought to have known better. His behavior then had been outrageous and only possible in a country that has no measure of conduct except its own conceit. The day had been wet and cold in this high region, so Andrew, noticing that Brenda felt chilly, shut the window nearest to her. To his amazement the apoplectic Herr Worms pushed back his chair, got up, approached him and let forth a torrent of abuse of which he did not understand a single word. But he understood the fellow's bawling voice, his clenched, threatening fists, and his face scarlet with rage.

"What's the matter?" he said to Jem.

"He says you've insulted him by shutting the window to-night, although you left it open this morning after he had sneezed twice with cold."

"Silly ass!" said Andrew. "If he wanted it shut, why couldn't he say so?"

That closed the incident as far as Brenda and her party were concerned. Herr Worms returned to his place, grumbling and muttering, and the English people ate their supper without further molestation. Next day they decided that the sun might be shining in the valley, and, taking their lunch with them, they struck down hill, lost their way, enjoyed themselves immensely and were out seven hours. When they got back there were no letters or papers from England yet; but Brenda heard from Lothar. He told her to return to Berlin instantly, but sent no money and gave no reason. She went down to supper without giving a thought to the politics of the world, depressed by her own future and occupied with her own troubles. She

sat down and looked through the open window at the landscape. The room was filling rapidly, but she did not turn her head till she heard some one at her own table, and then she was surprised to see Herr Worms and his family invading it. The next one, usually occupied by them, was taken by strangers, but she saw others empty at the opposite end of the room.

"This table is not free," she said. "My friends will be here directly."

She spoke in German and the man answered her in German, falling into invective without a moment's hesitation. The table was as free to him as to any one else, he roared. He supposed the English flag was not flying in German hotels yet, was it? Just the English way to think that the earth belonged to them, though they did nothing but cumber it. They had a lesson to learn and Germany was going to teach it. His wife would sit on that chair and his children would sit on those. He also would take a chair with the English lady's leave. English! He spat upon the English!

He actually did spit, so overcome was he by the poison gas within him; while his wife, smugly pleased with her man's patriotism, took the chair he had assigned to her. The children sat down, too, and as the table had been laid for four there was no vacant place yet for their father. Brenda had turned rather white, but had not risen yet. She did so when her own people appeared and came close enough to hear what the infuriated man was saying. He stood there, shaking his fist now at one of them and now at the other. They were all English and his gorge rose at the sight of them. That was the gist of what he was saying, and one word used over and over again even Violet could understand.

"Pig-dogs!" she translated. "He is calling us pig-dogs! What a funny little man! Why has he taken our table, Brenda?"

"I'm fed up with him," said Jem, and turning to Herr Worms, he said in his broken public-school German: *"Unser Tisch*—our table. *Verstehen Sie?"*

The whole room was now looking on, for Jem's remonstrance seemed to put Herr Worms into a frenzy compared with which his usual fits of bad temper were calms. He said everything over again in a louder voice and called upon his countrymen to agree with him. Then he began to say other things.

"If he only had a sword now he'd run us through," said Violet. "Come away, Jem. He's crazy!"

"You have not the least idea of the things the brute is saying," Brenda whispered to her sister-in-law. "He's insulting all the women of England now. Come away before our men understand."

For a moment the little group of English people stood there, isolated and hesitating. They could not recover their table by force and the waitress who served it had discreetly disappeared. They were startled and impressed by the demeanor of the other people in the room, for they saw even more clearly than Brenda had done last night that the bully had the crowd on his side and knew it. There were many people in the room who would not have behaved as he did, but they did not interfere. At least no one did until Jem said he would fetch the proprietor; and then he found at his elbow an elderly man with whom he had had some conversation a few days ago: a German gentleman, sedate and kindly, who spoke English well. He looked ominously grave.

"Have you heard the news?" he asked.

"I've not seen a paper for a week," said Jem.

"Is Mme. Caillaux acquitted?" asked Violet.

"Is there news from Ireland?" said Andrew.

The German looked from one to the other with wonder and some compassion, as a grown man might look at children asking about trifles on a day of doom.

"Mme. Caillaux has been acquitted," he said. "There has been a riot in Ireland."

He waited a moment, not because what he said roused any response beyond a quick breath of surprise, but because the emotion with which he was struggling mastered him. The spectacle of it so affected the four people waiting for him to speak that they received the news he had given in the way he evidently felt it himself, as news of no importance compared with that which was to come.

"Germany is in a state of war," he said in a measured voice as soon as he could speak.

"That is why Lothar has sent for me," cried Brenda.

"Has Germany declared war?" said Jem.

"Not yet. But we have been mobilizing for days. We are ready on both frontiers. You should leave at once . . . before it is too late."

"But we are not at war with any one," said Violet.

"Not to-day. You may be to-morrow. We do not know. We hope not." Then he turned to Jem again.

"You have women with you," he said. "You should go home at once. Public feeling against England is rising every hour."

XVIII

THE train droned on through the long hours of the night, weaving the same pattern mile by mile on Brenda's sleepless brain. The night before she had not slept much, because she had thought herself unhappy and dreaded the future. But now that night of personal sorrow and vain wishes was blotted out by the experiences of this one. Life had begun anew in a world without the old checks and the old values. Yesterday the compelling trouble of love had moved Brenda's heart and filled her thoughts. But to-night love folded his wings and waited.

Opposite Brenda sat Andrew Lovel, and he had just fallen asleep. Perhaps he, too, had not slept the night before. He looked white and worn. When his eyes closed Brenda's eyes rested on his face with greater freedom than when his glance met her own: and she wanted to remember every line of it, for who knew whether she would ever see him again after the journey ended? He had insisted on coming to Berlin with her although she had insisted that she could travel alone. Jem and Violet had gone back to Strasburg and by this time should be safely over the frontier. Violet had wished Brenda to go with them, but Jem had upheld his sister when she said that she must see her husband before he went to war. None of them knew on the Saturday what England would do, for they had seen no papers all through that fateful week and had heard nothing but what the Germans at the

hotel had told them. Austria had bombarded Belgrade and Germany was in a state of war! What that meant all over the country they did not understand till they reached Freiburg on Saturday afternoon and saw the dislocation of traffic at the station, the moving troops, the wildly excited civilians and the breakdown of the usual routine. Jem and Violet had tumbled into a packed train, but their big trunks did not go with them. No heavy baggage to Paris could pass, the officials said, and refused to weigh it. People might take the train or stay behind as they pleased. But property belonging to French and English pig-dogs flying in hot haste from Germany! Let it stay in the Fatherland! He, the big brawny official, talking to an underling, took the responsibility.

"They'll find chiefly nailed boots in mine," said Jem. "I wish I could have a kick at that beast with one of them."

But he did not get his kick, and he and Violet never saw their trunks again. They said good-bye to Andrew and Brenda in a scene of great confusion, and were too much harried and hustled for hours to come to think of anything but the exigencies of the moment and the intense excitement reigning everywhere. As for Andrew and Brenda, they could not even find seats at first in the train going to Berlin. They stood in a corridor until a good many people got out at a junction, and then they found room in a first-class compartment in which two German officers and two civilians were traveling. By this time they were not surprised to be received with glances of declared hostility. By this time they had been made to understand that they were pig-dogs in a world of supermen and must suffer for it. For what is the use of being a superman if you can't show the pig-dog that you hate him? When the game is safe it is satisfying to the supersoul and when it is unsafe you kotow instead.

"I have lived in England for years," said the stout

commercial-looking superman sitting next to Brenda. "I know the English as I know myself. They will not fight. They always desert their friends. Besides, they are rotten."

He looked at his exceedingly stout wife, he looked at Brenda, he looked at Andrew Lovel, who did not understand a word of German, but was uncomfortably squeezed by the stout lady's bulging hold-all. It was an outsize hold-all of drab oatmeal cloth with a motto embroidered on it in bright blue. "Go East, go West, at Home's the Best," the motto said, but Andrew could not understand that, and all he knew about the hold-all was that the umbrellas in it were butting into his ribs. So without speaking he shifted it a little and instantly turned the superman and his spouse into raving lunatics. They began to storm just as Herr Worms in the hotel had stormed, and they tried to butt into Andrew's ribs again with their umbrellas. The two officers looked on superciliously and did not interfere.

"This is my seat," said Andrew, "I have paid for it and I want it."

"You call yourself a shentleman!" replied the superwoman.

"I shall call the guard unless you remove your umbrellas," said Andrew, addressing the superman.

Like a god from a machine the guard appeared at the door just then, demanding tickets; and he not only appeared like a god, but he acted like one, ending combat by decisive action. His compatriots complained loudly of the Englishman's insolent and provocative behavior. They had been sitting as still as mice, they said, with all their hand luggage close to them, when the Englishman had seized it and said it was in his way. The guard knew how English travelers invariably behaved and how unpleasant it was for refined people to travel with them. Andrew said nothing. Brenda waited. The guard pointed to the hold-all

still partly across Andrew's seat, but not as much so as when he had first moved it.

"Away with that!" he commanded in a voice of harsh command: and then Brenda spoke.

"The gentleman wants it away," she said. "It does not belong to him."

Andrew could only follow the pantomime of his companions, but he watched their faces fall, and after a vibrating moment of embarrassment he heard the guard shout something at them he judged to be unflattering, after which he saw him snatch up the hold-all and thrust it into the rack above. Then, having seen justice done, the man walked away, leaving his country-people more furious than ever with the triumphant pig-dogs, who, to avoid argument, shut their eyes and tried to sleep.

But sleep did not come easily to any one in the train that night, for it stopped often and at every station there were troops and a crowd. There was singing, laughter, shouting, hoarse cries of command, hurry, scuffle and the wail of children in a world that could not stop for children's needs. The movement in the train never ceased, the corridors were packed, officers swaggered through the press of people to the buffet and back again. The air grew fetid in spite of an open window here and there, and Brenda, weary and half suffocated, could neither sleep nor stay awake. She fell into a semi-comatose state in which she heard voices and scraps of dialogue and in which passing figures painted themselves on her fancy like figures in a nightmare, some of no account, some threatening and hateful. There was one officer who looked in at her compartment as if he wanted to find a seat there and she, opening her eyes heavily, saw him: saw his tall figure, his sensual thick-lipped face and his arrogant pale-blue eyes. It was a type she knew as a Londoner knows his city clerk, but she saw it to-night keyed to its topmost note, exultant and aggressive. The Day

had arrived and he was the hero of it—the hero and the victor. No thought of check came to temper the dominant mood. "In five weeks we shall be in Paris," she heard one say as she half dozed again.

"And what after?" asked another voice, harsh and jubilant.

"We shall see on Tuesday night. I have my ideas."

"You think the English will come in? How can they? They have no army, and if they tried to make one they would have a revolution. Besides, who ever heard of an untrained army facing one like ours? It would be wiped out at once."

"Then let us hope they will be fools enough to try. Sooner or later! What does it matter?"

"I wish I knew German," said Andrew next time there was a stop, and Brenda opened her eyes. "All the while those chaps were arguing I heard two words I knew and one I didn't know. I can understand when they say Engländers or Schweinhund, but what is *faul?* Is it foul?"

"Rotten . . . decadent," said Brenda, speaking in a low whisper, for she saw that the people with the hold-all had got out and that four gray uniforms were now sharing the compartment with them.

"They think we are rotten, do they?"

"They never think. They know."

"I'd like to ask them why. I don't feel rotten," said Andrew.

Brenda looked at him dissuasively.

"Wait till you get to Berlin," she said. "I'll introduce August to you. He can't run a sword through you even if you laugh at him: and I know you would."

That was the last flicker of laughter possible in this new evil world thought Brenda hours later when, wide-eyed and sleepless, she watched for the dawn. She had laughed a little as she spoke of August, and Andrew had responded with the twinkle in his eyes

that was so humorous and understanding. He looked tired and anxious to-night, he clattered no sword, he was stiffened by no uniform, his speech was the speech of his kind, low-toned and never emphatic. Yet Brenda, judging him in the light of the present hour, with brooding and high hope, judged that he was not rotten. Body and soul he was sound and he stood for his country, for her country. But she had sold her birthright for a mess of pottage and the flavor of it was bitter in her mouth.

A clash of voices, a scuffle, a woman's shriek and then a shot so close that every one in the compartment rose in alarm. A scream with the shot, a long sighing groan and then the thud of a body falling to the ground. Then Babel and throughout the train panic. Every one talking, women in hysterics, officials shouting hoarse directions. Brenda, who had risen, sat down because her strength seemed to turn to water. She was terrified, for through all the noise and confusion she heard one word spit out over and over again with every variation of anger and malevolence. England! Engländer! Even Andrew understood.

"You stay here," said Andrew. "I'll find out what has happened."

Brenda was glad to sit still. She felt sick and cold, for the first hubbub had subsided and she could hear the labored breath of a man in agony. Were they doing nothing to relieve him? Was no one there to help? With a sudden impulse she rose to her feet and went into the corridor. The officers from her compartment crowded it, but they drew back a little from the group they had been watching when she appeared.

A middle-aged man lay huddled on the floor in a pool of blood. Andrew and a man who looked like a doctor bent over him; but as Brenda approached, the doctor, speaking to one of the railway officials, said there was nothing to be done. The corridor as far as

Brenda could see was packed with people, and those who could not find room there were looking out of the carriages.

"What happened?" said Brenda.

"He has been shot," said Andrew. "He is English. I thought he might want to send some message, but I was too late."

Brenda heard what he said, but she also heard a sound that appalled her, a low running growl of hate and rage like the growl of a wild beast about to spring.

"Who shot him?" she whispered.

"One of the officers in the train."

"But it is murder!" cried Brenda, no longer whispering: and, lifting her eyes, she met the impudent stare of the thick-lipped officer she had seen when she was half awake an hour ago. He took a step forward and his face reddened with anger at Brenda's cry. She saw the revolver in his hand and then her attention was drawn to the doctor, who had been examining the dying Englishman.

"You can do nothing," he said. "In another moment he will be dead. Go back to your places and be careful what you say. People are excited."

Brenda rose, signed to Andrew Lovel to follow her, and felt relieved when they were in their seats again. She had not lived in Berlin for a year without hearing stories of quarrels leading to duels and she knew that the man with her was in greater danger than she was herself. Any false step on her part might land Andrew in trouble, and she did not want to see him lying in a pool of blood, sobbing out his life unheeded and unavenged.

"They've not even arrested the brute," said Andrew. "It was that fat-faced one with the revolver."

"I know," said Brenda and began to cry.

"He was unconscious at once," said Andrew, speaking of the Englishman. "He was not in pain."

"He was murdered!" cried Brenda. "What had he done? and no one cares. What has come to the world?"

Before Andrew could speak the compartment filled again, and one of the people traveling in it now was the officer with the revolver. She turned her face from every one, trying to hide her distress, and when the train stopped, listened with shuddering attention to the removal of the murdered man and the colloquy carried on by the guard, various witnesses and the station-master. She heard the word police, but no police came; she heard the man with the revolver give his name and address, but when the train moved on he was still sitting unconcernedly in his place. No one had dared to detain him, and by what he said to the other officers in the carriage she understood that he was without shame and without fear.

"He would not move to let me pass. He stood in the way, and when I pushed him he swore at me. Is one to stand that from one of these English pigs? Must one make oneself respected or not?"

"We have our orders," said another. "We know what All-Highest thinks about it."

"*Nur feste drauf,*" said some one else, quoting the Crown Prince's telegram to the commanding officer at Zaben whose lieutenant had thrust his sword through a crippled cobbler.

"The Day has come at last," said the man with the revolver.

"But it is not certain yet that they . . ."

"We are certain. Sooner or later we shall show them."

"It will be an awakening."

"One can be almost sorry for them."

"Sorry!"

"They are so fast asleep and they will be so wide awake."

"When the Zeppelins are over London. That will

be a trip to make. I have a cousin in command of one. He has told me things . . . like Sodom and Gomorrah the city will be wiped out . . ."

"By our cleansing fires."

"The air will reek with burning flesh . . ."

"City by city we shall accomplish it. The country places we shall starve."

"How will you manage that?"

"With our submarines. We shall blockade their coasts."

"But they have ships."

"They will not have ships. What can ships do against our submarines? Besides their sailors are always drunk. You know how it was on the *Titanic* . . . the captain, the officers, the crew, the passengers, all drunk and going to their doom."

"And such people think they can stand up to us."

"When we have done with them there will not be a people."

"On their own heads be it. They have grudged us our prosperity!"

"The Day!"

Brenda opened her eyes and sat up. In this carriage, almost brushing her skirt, sat a murderer: and other men talked with him, condoning and approving. What temper possessed a people who could see such deeds unmoved and gloat over worse to come! What dishonor would stain them? What crimes pollute their progress? What cruelties their conquest. For they sat there as conquerors, never doubting their forecasts or dreaming of a hitch in their plans. They talked of Paris in September as a tourist does who has taken his ticket. They talked of St. Petersburg too and of Constantinople. By the time morning came they were established at Bombay, had reckoned with the Japanese and were making a new German world of North and South America. Africa had been easily

swept into the Hohenzollern maw with the help of the Boers. Meanwhile Andrew slept; the train droned on; and in the corridor just outside there was still the pool of blood.

XIX

"FEE-FO-FUM! I smell the blood of an Englishman." That is what it had come to in Germany, thought Brenda, as she looked askance at the man who had committed the murder and in fancy saw her Englishman spitted on his unsheathed sword. These things happened. She had only to walk into the corridor to see the stains of blood; and so near her that she could watch his face and hear his voice sat the ogre, boastful and unashamed. His fellows were in sympathy with him and were still talking of his prowess in slaying one who had impudently put his hand on the sacred uniform. They had been patient long enough. Everywhere they had met with rebuffs at the hands of these pig-dogs! Agadir! Brenda pretended to sleep again. She had seen August foam at the mouth about Agadir and could have reeled off all his arguments proving the innocence of the German hemmed in by unscrupulous and designing foes. How weary she was of this fire-eating world: and now it was on the war-path. She knew its fanatic hate, she feared its prepared and secret strength, she shuddered at the days to come. Meanwhile she kept her eyes shut because she heard Andrew stir as if he was awake again; and she did not want him to speak to her in English. She believed that the mere sound of their tongue might be treated as a provocation by the armed bullies in the carriage with them. If she had chosen to enter into conversation with them and tell them her husband was a German officer their manner would have changed she knew. They would have

turned civil, possibly gallant, called her *gnädige Frau* and offered her their services. But she would not have done it except in extremity and then she would have hated such a way of escape. She was English. She was a pig-dog and she did not want their help or their gallantry: the help of blood-stained hands.

"I want to be in England," she said, when at last the journey came to an end and she was in a taxi with Andrew. "If we go to war I want to be in my own country . . . not here."

"Germany will be no place for an Englishwoman if we go to war," said Andrew. "I've seen enough to know that. They've got their knife into us sure enough. I expect your husband will want you to leave as soon as you can. He must know the state of feeling here."

Brenda did not feel sure of what lay before her. The life she had left behind when she started on her holiday, a husband who was uxorious one day and indifferent the next, who exercised his rights but neglected his duties, a life of friction and yet of loneliness closed in upon her as the taxi sped through the long Kurfürstendamm to the house in which she lived, the vulgar florid house with its red-brick guardian angels, gilded balconies and castellated turrets.

She wondered in what mood she would find Lothar and whether he would behave civilly to Andrew Lovel. She had mentioned his presence at St. Peter in her letters, she had telegraphed from Freiburg to say when they would arrive, and she had asked to have the spare room got ready in case he wished to stay the night and go on next day. It had not occurred to her that any change in her ordinary life would be considered necessary because her husband had received a call to arms, and she expected her own desire to go to England to be treated as one of those female whims no sensible German can consider. So when the door of the flat opened she was amazed to see every article of furniture

that was in view shrouded in dust-sheets, while Little Mamma and Mina came out of the kitchen to receive her. They both looked sour, solemn and depressed. They kissed her with funereal sighs, stared inhospitably at Andrew, and when Brenda presented him made little bobs of acknowledgment but did not offer to shake hands.

"Where is Lothar?" said Brenda.

"He is in the dining-room with August. To-morrow the dear boy goes to face death for the Fatherland."

"But why are you wrapping everything up?" said Brenda, who from where she stood could see into the spare room and saw that far from being ready it was also tucked up as if for a long period of disuse. "If Mr. Lovel stays here to-night we shall want the spare room."

"I am carrying out my son's wishes," said Little Mamma stiffly. "He will doubtless explain them to you himself. He will also inform you that it is not his intention to entertain the enemies of his country in war-time."

"But has England declared war?"

"Not yet. Lothar is of the opinion that she will. She can hardly keep out of it since she has engineered it."

"WHAT?" cried Brenda, not trusting her ears.

"August says that he blames England for everything," said Mina; and she glanced at Andrew Lovel, wondering perhaps why, in spite of their tactful remarks, his face remained a blank.

"Mr. Lovel doesn't understand German," said Brenda. "You'll have to speak English if you wish him to know what you say."

As she spoke she walked into the dining-room, where she found Lothar and August drinking beer. They got up to receive her and stared woodenly at Andrew Lovel, who was beginning to notice the unfriendliness of his reception and to take it as an Englishman does

take bad manners, with chilly dignity. Brenda knew he must be puzzled and astonished by the surroundings to which she had grown accustomed, by the two grotesquely dressed women, by the ineffable August, who looked downright dirty this morning, and by the impolite swagger with which Lothar sprawled in his chair and almost turned his back on his wife and her guest.

"Mr. Lovel, at great inconvenience to himself, traveled with me here," she said indignantly. "He would be safely over the frontier if he had gone with my brother and his wife."

"Pray why should you have feared to travel alone?" cackled August. "Who would have harmed you? You seem to forget that you are in a highly civilized country and not in the wilds."

"I am very glad I was not alone," said Brenda. "It was a horrible journey. An Englishman was murdered in our train, close to our carriage."

"Who murdered him?" asked Lothar.

"An officer who wore your uniform. I didn't hear his name."

"Did you hear in what way he had given offense?" hectored August.

"He was unarmed," said Brenda. "The man who did it was not even arrested. He traveled opposite me and other officers shook hands with him . . ."

"Then doubtless they know that he had defended his honor and was in the right," said Lothar.

"It was a cowardly and brutal murder," said Brenda in a low, tense voice. Her eyes saw no one in the room as she spoke but were fixed in horror on that inward picture haunting her persistently: the picture of her countryman broken and huddled on the ground in his last agony. Her husband's start of angry denial and August's reddening face recalled her to the present moment and she spoke again in a lighter tone.

"We are both extremely tired and very hungry,"

she said. "I will order coffee and then I should like to speak to you, Lothar. I do not know why you are shutting up the house unless you think, as I do, that I had better be in England while you are away. In that case I should like to travel with Mr. Lovel and not alone. I suppose there will be crowds and difficulties everywhere."

"In England! With our enemies! Just so! Just what I expected," screamed August. "The proper place for the wife of a German officer."

"*Aber* Brenda!" mewed Mina. "Is not a wife one with her husband?"

"Has it occurred to you that my son is about to offer up his life for his country?" said Little Mamma. "Have you reflected that he may lose his limbs or his life; probably his life? Our army is not one of paid mercenaries like yours. When we go to war the blood of the nation is spilled. Our brothers and sons fall in a holy cause."

Lothar's hand was drumming on the table, his face was gloomy and thunderous and his eyes had an unpleasant light in them as he glanced at his wife.

"You will not go to England," he said. "Your place is here. I shall shut up the flat and you will live with my parents while I am away. If I am killed you can do as you please, but while I am away you will obey my orders."

So far every one had spoken German, and Andrew had not been able to follow what they were saying. But he could see that he was not being made welcome, that the whole flat was topsy-turvy, that Brenda was embarrassed and unhappy, and that her husband and his family seemed to be excited and annoyed. He had never seen any one quite like August before, and he had never heard any one groan and sigh as the two women did at intervals. They all talked with their hands and nodded their heads and lifted their voices more than his own country-people did, but he had seen

that kind of pantomime at St. Peter and been amused by it. Not that he was at all inclined to be supercilious about other people's ways because they varied from his own. Such varieties are partly what enlarge the mind in foreign travel, and if August had encountered live English people, instead of mugging them up in histories written with a bias, he might have been less ridiculous and disagreeable. As it was he cast venomous glances at Andrew, who even after a night's journey looked well dressed and well groomed: and in his mean muddled soul hated him because he himself wanted a bath and a razor. Andrew had some inkling of what was going on and would have fled long since if he had not felt bound to wait on Brenda's wishes. The entrance of a maid-servant in answer to her summons created a diversion, and when she had ordered coffee she spoke to Lothar in English.

"Will you look after Mr. Lovel?" she said to Lothar. "I want to take off my hat. When we have had coffee we can talk over things."

"There is nothing to talk over," said Lothar, speaking English, too. "I strongly advise Mr. Lovel to leave Berlin by the next train. If, as we expect, England comes in, he may not get away at all. We shall not allow any one of a military age to leave the country."

"But, Lothar, Mr. Lovel does not know Berlin and does not speak German. You must help him to get away."

"He need only drive to Cook's office," said Lothar frigidly.

Andrew jumped up and held out his hand to Brenda.

"Good-bye," he said, "that's good advice about Cook. I'll get the name of a hotel from them and stay there to-night . . . in case you decide to go to England, you know."

"My wife will not go to England," said Lothar. "She will stay here."

"But I want to see you again . . ." said Brenda. "Can you come back when you have arranged about your journey?"

"This is MY house," screamed Lothar, hammering so loudly on the table with his fists that the beer jug and glasses danced and slid on the metal tray. "I wear the Kaiser's uniform. I will receive no Englishman as a friend."

"It is simply impudent of Brenda to expect it!" said August.

"Good-bye, Andrew," said Brenda, her eyes fearless and indignant. "Thank you for seeing me safe here. We are not always quite as excited as we are to-day. You must make excuses for us. Tell them at home that I'm all right."

"I shall send you a message somehow," he said in a low voice, "in case you change your mind and come. I have this address written down."

So Andrew went, after holding her hand an instant in his own. He went without looking at any one else in the room or speaking to them; but he was accompanied to the door by a hiss from August, and though he thought the professor a worm he recognized that his boiling hate was symptomatic of public feeling and that the sooner an Englishman crossed the frontier the better.

"He has not a friend in Berlin," said Brenda. "I wish he had not insisted on bringing me back. What must he think of our manners?"

"In future it is our manners that will impose themselves on the world," said August. "We shall be masters of Europe in six weeks, and every one will have to bow to our humanity and greatness."

"When you boast and brag a little less I shall believe in your greatness a little more," said Brenda, and this was the first time she had spoken her mind to August. He looked so absurdly taken by surprise that she laughed . . . laughed at the learned manly August . . . and went out of the room.

"This is terrible," said Little Mamma, "the woman has no idea of what is becoming to one in her position. My beloved boy, what a mistake you made when you married her. Nevertheless, my offer holds good. While our warrior is absent his old father and mother will console his young wife."

This sentiment was so beautiful and in the course of two agitated days had become so inextricably mixed with Little Mamma's ideas that she repeated it without reflection and was hurt when Lothar showed impatience, said nothing and went out of the room.

"Poor boy! He is upset," she sighed. "If only he would take a *Brausepulver.*"

"After all he may return to us," said Mina. "They think so well of him at headquarters that they may find him something safe to do."

"You do your brother an injustice, wife," said August. "I am sure that he wishes for nothing better than to die for his country."

"Men have such noble sentiments," mewed Mina; "I'm deeply attached to my country, but I don't in the least wish to die for it. I prefer to live and see the children grow up."

"War is terrible!" admitted August, "but the growth of our Empire makes it a condition of existence. We must be brave and remember that our cause is a holy one. We have God with us."

Meanwhile Lothar had gone into Brenda's room and sat down there. She was seated, too, in front of her toilet-table and was taking what she needed from her dressing-case. She was so tired and so faint with hunger that her thoughts were dulled and she did not feel ready for a conflict with her husband. Yet she supposed there must be one if she said anything more about going to England.

"How pale you look," he began. "Are you ill again?"

"I'm very tired . . . and hungry."

He rang the bell, and when the maid answered it she brought in a tray with coffee and fresh rolls.

"When do you go, Lothar?" said Brenda directly they were by themselves again.

"On Tuesday evening at eight."

"Where do you go?"

"That I am not permitted to tell you."

"It has come like thunder. We had seen no papers for a week."

"We are ready."

Brenda buttered a roll and ate some of it with difficulty. She found it was easier to drink than to eat and that the hot coffee revived her.

"Will England fight?" she went on.

"It looks like it. They see a chance of stabbing us in the back and mean to take it."

"But you must have known they would stand by France."

"You talk like a fool. England stands by nothing but her money-bags. She never has and never will."

It was not exactly the moment for a humorous memory, and yet Brenda's thoughts played her a trick and brought to mind the Socialist in a "Punch" dialogue who spoke with "all 'istry vivid to his recollection." She wanted all 'istry vivid to her recollection in order to confute Lothar, and yet she knew that a whole library of histories would not help her.

"I shall be very unhappy here by myself if England and Germany are at war . . ." she began.

"You will not be by yourself. You are too young to live alone. *Dass schickt sich nicht.* I have made the best arrangements possible for you and I will tolerate no discussions about it. If you were a German woman with a high sense of duty, you would seize the chance of serving and comforting my parents. It is not amusing for them to see their only son go forth to the battle-field."

"The trouble is that I am not a German woman,"

said Brenda. "Your parents do not like me, and I am most unwilling to live with them. The war may last a long time."

"At most three months. We shall be in Paris on Sedan Day. From Paris it is not far to Calais."

"But it is a long way from Calais to Dover . . . for a hostile army," said Brenda impulsively.

"London will be in greater danger than Paris," said Lothar, scowling at her remark but not answering it. "We do not expect to destroy Paris; but we shall reduce London to ashes. You should advise your parents to escape at once."

"I should like to go to them," said Brenda.

"The wife of a German officer remains in Germany. That is my last word."

"Then I would rather live on here by myself."

"That is out of question. I will not allow it."

"I am sure that I shall feel in the way in the Joachimstrasse."

"Who was that man you brought with you from St. Peter?"

"I told you. Violet's brother, Andrew Lovel."

"He is in love with you. Any one can see it."

"He has been in New Zealand for two years. He may go back there."

"You are in love with him. I see that, too. You want to go back to England in order to be with him while I am shedding my blood for my country. That is your English morality. I know it well."

Brenda's color rose, but she did not deny what her husband said. It was true, and yet his coarse application of the truth was as false as possible. She loved Andrew with her whole heart, but he had gone and she had come back to the squalid inferno of her marriage because the Law was stronger than Love. Her subtleties of mind never took the easy path that follows desire rather than duty. Perhaps it was a mistaken idea of right that chained her to a union from which

love had fled, but to repudiate it would involve issues too tangled and tremendous for present contemplation. Perhaps some day she would tell Lothar that since they no longer loved each other they should separate, but she could not do so now. The future had become hidden from every one enmeshed in this vast horror of war, still hovering over the world but about to descend on it, spreading ruin and misery. Brenda had only been a child at the time of the Boer War and did not remember much about it. But she had read descriptions of the battlefields in the Balkans a year ago.

"I will do whatever you wish, Lothar," she said, not without effort; but the separation impending and the stern call he had to obey seemed to harden his heart rather than soften it, and to rouse his easily roused temper.

"Of course you will do as I wish," he said brutally; "you can't help it. You've no money, I suppose, and I shall give you none. At any rate this is my ultimatum. You will stay with my parents and behave yourself or you will never enter my house again. We are not in a patient mood to-day, I may tell you. We are not inclined to stand any nonsense from those English people who are living amongst us. Those who are wise will keep quiet and dance to our tune. You have to learn what it means when Germany goes to war."

XX

BRENDA would have been glad to make friends with Lothar and part from him in peace; but she saw that he did not want peace or friendship. His fury against England asked for a victim and she was handy. He and all his family regarded her desire to leave Germany when her German husband was going to war as a crime luckily preventable. They did not reflect that Germany had not done much to win her affections. They watched her closely, as if they thought she might run away, and they laid enormous stress upon the manifold duties those who stayed at home could perform for their country.

When they went to the station on Tuesday to see Lothar off, there were such crowds everywhere and such intense excitement that Brenda thought she could have escaped easily if she had known where to go. But she only had ten shillings in her pocket, and no one, except possibly Siegmund Abel, would have given or lent her money. Besides, she shrank from traveling alone in a time of such disturbance, and she believed that Andrew Lovel must have left Berlin before now. She went home with the Erdmanns, was installed in their handsomely-furnished spare room, and told next morning when she appeared at breakfast that England had declared war on Germany. She was told other things, too, that interested her less, some being ancient history and some prophetic. Herr

Erdmann's fulminations were mainly directed against English policy in the past, and were, as Brenda knew, grossly inaccurate. He was in a lachrymose mood this morning, and went back to 1704 when, he said, poor Germany was overrun with English soldiers.

When Brenda suggested that perhaps English soldiers in 1704 were helping poor Germany to fight her battles, he got as red as a turkey-cock, and said that every one of any intelligence knew that the English were not taught history or, in fact, anything else in their schools. When that discussion ended, because Brenda retired from it, August arrived in a state of foaming excitement. There had been a riot, he said, in front of the British Embassy the night before, because the Embassy people had attacked the peaceable crowd in front of it. It was not safe this morning for any one who looked English to go out of doors.

"But how did the Embassy people attack the crowd?" asked Brenda.

"They threw stones at it—huge stones, that they must have collected for weeks before. Sir Goschen was there directing them."

"How can you believe such stuff?" said Brenda, and drew wicked lightnings from August's beady brown eyes.

"If it had not been for our magnificent police, the whole place would have been wrecked," he cried. "All the windows were broken."

"By the crowd?"

"By the justly incensed crowd."

"They must have brought stones and sticks with them then. There are none lying about in the street."

"Not at all. They returned those that were thrown at them. That can be proved."

"I hope I shall be able to get English papers," said Brenda.

"What for? They all lie."

"I should like, for one thing, to see whether the

German Ambassador in London attacks an English crowd and gets his windows broken."

"A German Ambassador would have too much Kultur to do such a thing," said August.

"I suppose I shall be safe out of doors," said Brenda meditatively. "The crowd will hardly molest a woman."

"We are the most chivalrous and humane nation in the world," said August. "But we are the objects of a base conspiracy. Our invincible army will make short work of the foe. Nevertheless, we are roused, and if you take my advice you will keep indoors until we are in Paris."

"When do you expect to be in Paris?" asked Brenda, who remembered what Lothar had said, but thought it would be amusing to hear August's forecast, too.

"We do not expect. We do not boast. We know. We shall be in Paris on Sedan Day and in London three weeks later."

"Poor London!" said Brenda, and as she looked at the professor's mean puffy face she thought of London as you can think of anything big and complicated in a moment, with swift unconnected glimpses here and there, some moving, some still, some atmospheric, but all London, ugly, beautiful, laughed at a little, loved.

"How will you get there?" she said.

"In our Zeppelins."

"But you can't use your airships to murder non-combatants. No civilized power would do such a thing."

"Why not? If the women and children are murdered in sufficient numbers, the men will sue for peace. We shall not make war with rose-water. We shall stagger humanity. And we shall bring perfidious Albion to her knees."

Brenda, who had not seen an English paper for

more than a week, did not even know that the Navy was mobilized. All she knew of England led her to think that probably the English were not ready. They did not want war and the politicians in power wanted peace at almost any price. Their attention was fixed on Ireland and Labor. The German menace was a chimera invented by the Yellow Press and would never materialize. Brenda had often heard her father's friends, who were mostly old-fashioned Liberals, talk in this way and try to persuade the Unionist Jem that Germany was a land of scholars and dreamers, greatly misunderstood. With powerful foes to east and west it had to keep up an army, while as for its navy, its young, innocent small navy . . . was it not rather petty and suspicious of Great Britain to grudge a cousinly neighbor a few ships? They were wanted to protect German merchantmen.

"I must get hold of some English papers," she said. "I may find some have come for me. Anyhow, if the flat is to be shut up while Lothar is away, I must go there and see to things."

"I thought that my wife and Mina had seen to everything," said Herr Erdmann, looking offended. But Brenda, after a year in Germany, had become hardened to the family habit of looking offended, and sometimes went her own way in spite of it. She did this morning. She asked Herr Erdmann what money she could get at, found that Lothar had made no provision for her and started for her home with the ten shillings left from her holiday expenses. There was no money to be had anywhere, Herr Erdmann told her, in consequence of the crisis, but matters of that kind would soon be organized. Meanwhile no man knew whether he was going to be ruined or enriched by the war, but for his part he expected to rub along. His interests were in leather, and leather would be wanted in unusual quantities.

Brenda was not molested as she went in a tram car

to her end of the long Kurfürstendamm. People talked of nothing but the war, and when they noticed that she was English expressed their opinion of England with the urbanity to which she had become accustomed. The term pig-dog left her cold when she heard it on every tongue, and she thought that when she got to the flat she would look it out in her big dictionary because she did not really know what a pig-dog was. She guessed at a dog that herds and controls pigs as a sheep dog herds and controls sheep; and she hoped that if she was right the epithet as applied to the English would prove prophetic and descriptive. She supposed, however, that England's share in the war would be entirely naval and that August's talk and Lothar's talk about sacking London was just the usual bluff. She had read accounts of the Franco-German war in 1870 and she had heard her father talk of it. Her picture of that campaign was of a patriotic and dignified nation going forth to defend the right, fighting cleanly, dying bravely, severe but just in victory, merciful to civilians, honestly paying its way and doing no damage that could be avoided. Those old ideas of Germany had been in the background lately, and now that they reappeared startled her by their unreality. Those Germans were not these Germans, boastful as children, vain as savages, shrieking from the house-tops that might was right. No doubt they were efficient and formidable in war. "These fellows are like machines with a devil inside them." So Goethe had described the Spanish soldiers whose cruelties in the Netherlands were remembered and accursed after more than four hundred years. Now in the twentieth century the German machine was hammering at the gate of the Netherlands and would probably let the devil loose if it were thwarted. Brenda knew by this time what the civilization of a Prussian amounted to when he went mad with temper. But she took for granted

that even Prussians would respect non-combatants and women and children.

When she got to the flat she found that there was a great deal to do. The maids had been paid off and dismissed yesterday, so she was quite alone. Her husband and his family considered her an incompetent housekeeper partly because her ideas were English ideas and partly because she had shown inexperience. She considered that German women were devoted but fussy, but the chief difference between the family and herself was between their comments and her silence. They told her all she did was wrong. She disliked many of their ways and did not say so. She thought they harried their servants and sacrificed their minds to their stomachs; they thought her uninformed in the domestic arts and happy-go-lucky. Yet she was not a happy-go-lucky nature, but rather serious and dutiful. She puzzled over things, too, and all through her flat she found cases of what puzzled her in Germany. The Germans were the most efficient, civilized, moral and industrious people on earth; she had their word for it. They were the salt of the earth. Their Kaiser had told them so. Both men and women in their respective and sharply separated spheres had reached heights of perfection from which they looked down at decadent races like the English and the French. Why then had the kitchen saucepans been put away in such a state of grease? Why were ends of food left in the food cupboard and condiments in the cruets? Why was the linen in a state of confusion and Lothar's dressing-room still strewn with the débris of his hasty packing? Brenda had been told that she need only attend to her personal belongings, and as she had slept late after her journey this had taken her most of her time. But what intrigued her was Little Mamma's remark at breakfast this morning about having tucked away her dear boy's possessions safely and in an orderly manner, that an Englishwoman

would not know how to do it or be inclined to take the trouble. Why praise yourself so loudly and so much for what, after all, you have not done over well? It was the same elsewhere, thought Brenda, as with her sleeves turned up she attacked the dressing-room floor with a dust-pan and a short brush. "Made in Germany" was not the hall-mark of perfection it should have been if German self-appraisement was justified. The Germans did some things well and some things badly, like other nations. They had fine qualities and qualities the reverse of fine. Why were they making war on the world and springing on it like a thief in the night? The nation was acting as the individual acted, using its sword as August, for instance, used his tongue, to proclaim his own superiority and be a scourge and an offense to others. But their sword no doubt was sharp and ready. For that the whole nation travailed and denied itself. What would happen now that it was unsheathed against her own sleepy country? Would the fight be like one between a whale and an elephant, as Bismarck had said, or would they come to a grapple?

A ring at the door diverted her ideas and she went to answer it, hoping for a postman and letters. But when she opened the door she saw Andrew Lovel, who by this time should have been far away.

"You haven't gone," she cried.

"No." He shut the door and Brenda took him into the drawing-room. "Why didn't you write?" she said. "You said you would."

"I called yesterday and left my card with my address on it."

"No one told me you had called. What time did you come?"

"About three."

"I was in. I was packing. Who opened the door?"

"A boy in uniform."

"Fritz! Did you ask for me?"

"Yes; but I couldn't make him understand and while I was trying that little cat-faced woman came along . . ."

"Mina!"

"And said you could not see any one. So I thought I would have another try to-day."

"But why haven't you started? It isn't safe here."

"I'm going on Thursday in the Embassy train. I stumbled against an old school chum who has had a diplomatic job here and he is looking after me."

"I wish I could go with you."

"I came to see about that," said Andrew.

"But my husband has not changed his mind," said Brenda. "He expects me to live with his parents while he is away."

"Are you all right with them?"

"Yes. I'm all right. At least I should be if I could feel German . . . but I can't. I'm haunted!"

"Haunted!"

"By a line . . . by three words—'England, my England.' Everything is in it. Everything I love and believe."

"Yes," said Andrew, and silence fell between them.

"They expect to be in Paris on Sedan Day," said Brenda, speaking when speech became easier than the quivering silence that took them closer and closer in thought and feeling. "Then they are going to invade us and sack London. I know what you must think when they boast and brag as they do . . ."

"Pride goes before a fall. I used to write it in copy-books."

"But it isn't simply boasting. Tell them so in England, Andrew. Tell them they are up against something formidable this time. 'Machines and devils in the machines.' That describes them. You'll see. And such hordes of them. I know England

won't believe in it at first. Her idea of a German is of a little Whitechapel-hairdresser or a waiter, tallow-faced and obsequious."

"They are with us."

"But they have all been trained and they are rushing back at this very moment. England will lock the door when they have gone. And they will turn them into machines, and in the machines there will be devils; and devils will lead them."

"Come back with me, Brenda. I'm sure your father and mother would be glad if you did."

"I don't know. They have ideas about marriage. They think it is irrevocable."

"Well . . . so it is," said Andrew, and Brenda could have laughed at his simplicity if she had not felt more inclined to cry. Dear Andrew! with his plain code, his wholesome opinion and his want of subtlety. He wanted to take her out of danger and distress, but he wanted it for her sake only. She could see him on their journey guarding her and serving her till she was safely home, and then with his heart strong within him bidding her good-bye. For she knew beyond a doubt to-day that he loved her even as she loved him, for ever. Yet she saw herself letting him go; and so the old problem began to vex her soul again, the problem of a standard you carry through life and may not lower although victory denies you your heart's desire.

"Tell them that you've seen me," she said, trying to speak more lightly. "Tell them that I'm living with Lothar's parents in the greatest comfort. Will letters pass between England and Germany?"

"I've no idea. I should think so."

"I shall write and they must write, too; and so must you, Andrew. Oh! I do envy you going back where your heart is . . ."

She stopped because Andrew Lovel looked at her and his eyes said what his lips dared not. His heart

was not going with him because in spite of all the laws of God and man she had it in her keeping. And this was the moment of farewell, possibly the last moment they would spend together in this uncertain world. She looked at him and tried to print his likeness on her mind so that she might see him as he lived, every day of the long empty years to come.

"You must go now, Andrew," she said at last. "It's no use. We both know it's no use. I must stay and you must go."

"Yes, I must go," said Andrew. "But you won't forget, Brenda, will you? If ever you want me . . ."

"I know."

"Wherever I am. Whatever I'm doing . . ."

"Good-bye!"

XXI

BRENDA belonged to a generation that did not take everything its grandfather and grandmother believed for granted. She had seen "Milestones," that poignant picture of the progress of ideas. She had seen all the plays that inveigh against the moral and social laws: she had listened to ultra-modern women talk of the right to motherhood: two of her school-friends were brilliant suffragettes and had been in prison: another had taken to the road for three months because she wanted to see what it was like. In Berlin, she had met women at Elsa's house who were in fierce revolt against everything ordained by man: and above all against marriage. In fact, Brenda's experience was not out of date. It is for her conduct you must make allowances. Some strong inexplicable sense of duty had taken her back to Berlin when she wanted to go to England with Jem and Violet: and had kept her there although her husband deserved nothing at her hands. Perhaps her faithfulness was to her ideal of marriage rather than to Lothar. She knew that if she had fled to England with Andrew Lovel she would not have felt the inward serenity that supported her now, although when she was hard pressed she often asked herself if she had not been a fool. A letter that came through from Violet almost persuaded her of it. "We had a fright when we stopped at Strasburg," she wrote. "We were told by the guard that an officer wished to speak to us: and we expected trouble. But the officer was

an agreeable sad-looking man who had an English wife and a young child. He said it was impossible to leave them in Germany and asked if we would escort them safely to England. Of course we did, and it made me wish more than ever that you had come with us. This couple had been living in a little frontier town, and the things the wife told us about military society there and about the way she had been treated because she was English made one's blood boil. We told her about you, and she said she supposed it would be better in Berlin. In a great city people are never as rancorous and petty as in a village."

Brenda could not agree to that. She thought that no village could outdo Berlin in spite and rancour. She had heard August actually boast of the insults heaped on the members of the Russian Embassy as they left Berlin. He had been in the crowd. He had seen the women and children crouching on the floor of the cars to avoid the blows of the mob. He himself was not ashamed to say that he spat at them. Why not? Was it not patriotic and noble to be moved by your country's danger and enraged by the sight of your country's foes. If he had his way he would imprison every one of hostile blood, regardless of age and sex. Moreover he had the best authority for believing that this would shortly be done. He glanced at Brenda as he spoke, but she did not ask any questions or look perturbed, because she did not attach weight to what August said. She asked Siegmund Abel if she stood in danger of internment and he assured her that she did not. In Germany a married woman is if possible less of an entity than in other western countries. As the wife of a German officer Brenda was safe from the police.

But she was not happy. She had not realized what it would mean to live amongst the enemies of her country in war time. At least she had known that it would be tiresome and disagreeable; but she had

not foreseen how acute her sense of desolation would soon become and her longing for trustworthy news. She had letters from home at irregular intervals, but no English papers reached her and she could not buy them in Berlin. In fact Siegmund Abel, who was not a scaremonger, warned her not to attempt it or in any way to emphasize her nationality out of doors. She could not help looking English, and she soon found that on this account she must not walk in crowded streets or even enter shops alone, and her husband's people let her see that they preferred not to show themselves in public places with her. Brenda could hardly blame them, for every day there were stories of insults offered to English people, while the restrictions put on those remaining in the city grew more and more severe. At first she tried paying a few visits in the usual way, but she now gave this up. People she had liked received her kindly but with such evident embarrassment that for their sakes she did not go there again: while some she had been bound to know officially but had never liked were downright rude. She could not believe that the same thing was going on in England in the same class. She hoped not.

The old Erdmanns were kind according to their lights. She occupied the best bedroom, had plenty to eat and drink, and was never reproached with her naionality except by innuendo. In fact Herr Erdmann went so far as to say that she could not help having been born and bred in London, and that she was not personally responsible for Sir Edward Grey's villainy in causing the war. Frau Erdmann was not so broad-minded as her husband. She said she could not be. Every one with English sympathies was responsible, but Brenda was her daughter-in-law and therefore entitled to protection as long as Lothar was alive. Her being in the house made extra work for everybody, but what did work matter at such a time at this? It prevented one from thinking too much

about what was happening east and west. Frau Erdmann was very seriously annoyed with Mina one day because she said she meant to knit some winter socks for the soldiers. The war would be over before the leaves fell; and German men would be in their homes again. The army was in Brussels already. How many days' march then was it from Brussels to Paris in this glorious weather?

No one seemed able to answer Frau Erdmann. People talked of Louvain instead. It had been burned to the ground because the brutal Belgians had fired from their houses on peaceable German troops. The All-Highest said his heart bled for Louvain! What a Christian message! What a noble sentiment! Worthy of the most humane and civilized nation in the world.

"When a village or a city is burned to the ground in war, what becomes of the people who live in it?" said Brenda, and was told that hardships were inseparable from war even when the most humane and civilized nation in the world was waging it. She was so little satisfied with this reply and so anxious to know what was really happening that she wrote to her mother asking urgently for news of what the English were doing and for English papers. But none came. She observed that the mood of Berlin was changing for the worse: although the fall of Namur was celebrated with rejoicings. Perhaps the Belgian resistance had done something more than was admitted. Perhaps at any rate it had given France and England breathing time. It almost seemed as if there had been a hitch in the German plans. After the fall of Maubeerge and the destruction of Louvain came some bad news, from Heligoland and Togoland: nothing that could affect ultimate results, but enough to rouse fresh feeling against the English. Brenda met it everywhere.

"I wish I could go to England," she said to Sieg-

mund Abel, and he answered that in his opinion she ought to have gone when war was declared. Now it would not be easy.

"Can't I go by sea from Hamburg to Dover?" she said.

He looked at her.

"Do you think that our ships are leaving Hamburg as usual?" he said.

Brenda had not thought about it. She had heard August say that the English navy was in hiding because it was afraid of the German navy, and she had seen the same thing solemnly asserted in most German newspapers. She did not exactly believe it, but of the real state of things she had not the least idea.

"If our navy is afraid of yours and our soldiers have all run away from yours, why do you hate us so?" she said to August.

"You have engineered this war," he snarled.

"But why did we since we have no army and an inferior navy?"

"You let your Allies fight for you. That's the English way. The Russians are in East Prussia. Berlin is full of refugees. God knows what will happen to us all."

Brenda could not go on with her questions. The excitable little man was demented by fright and fury she perceived, and she wondered what nerve he would have next week for a lecture on the war that he was to give in aid of a voluntary hospital. These were dark days for Brenda for the English news that reached her was uniformly bad. She heard and read that the British Expeditionary Force had been cut to pieces, that the Germans were thundering at the gates of Paris and that Antwerp would shortly be in their hands. The mood of Berlin had changed again to one of triumph curiously mingled with the most vindictive hate. She had spoken the truth to August when she

said that she did not understand it. If the Germans believed what they said about their enemies: if they were as sure of victory as they pretended, why did they consume themselves with rage? Brenda had heard of people turning green with rage, but whenever August talked of England she saw it happen. And why always England — that nation of unwarlike hucksters who would not arm themselves and fight? Why not the Russian rabble or the French degenerates for a change? It was whispered that the All-Highest felt sorry for the French and would soon allow them to conclude a separate peace. Russia, too, might receive a drubbing and then be permitted to lie down. But England! No fate that the poets of the nation could invent was bad enough for England. Brenda saw most of the comic papers and therefore saw the depths to which the most cultured nation could descend. Yet they only echoed what she heard everywhere around her. One poet described a funeral pyre on which the whole English race, men, women and children were burnt in sacrifice. He said the smoke of it reached heaven and the fumes of it were pleasing to German nostrils. In England Brenda might have laughed as she read it. In Berlin she shuddered. For this cult of hate was making itself more and more felt: and though it was a pitiable thing it was also disturbing to any one marked out for a victim. Besides, as time went on she felt that she was an incubus in her husband's family. They did not want an Englishwoman with them. Her presence was almost a reflection on their loyalty, and as the temper of the city rose might constitute a danger. She wrote in this strain to Lothar, who was in Brussels, but received no answer. She knew through Elsa that the beautiful Jutta was in Brussels, too. She had written describing a moonlight picnic to Louvain and had compared it to Pompeii. August had said it was a beautiful highly cultured letter, and that only a German woman

could have written it. Brenda, little as she knew about Louvain, thought it an odious letter, but did not dare to say so.

Willy nilly she had to go to August's lecture about the war and its causes. The whole household was going and Little Mamma said that Brenda must come with them. If she refused and stayed at home then Little Mamma would naturally stay at home, too. She could not leave a guest alone even if the guest was a daughter-in-law. Yes! Little Mamma knew such things were done in England. But she had never heard or read that the English understood hospitality. Mina would be hurt to tears because, after the lecture, she expected the whole family and one or two of August's colleagues to supper. She had expressly said that she meant to make Brenda welcome as the wife of Lothar, and try to forget that she belonged to the same nation as the traitor Grey. Nevertheless, if Brenda insisted on separating from the others on an occasion meant to unite and cheer them . . .

So Brenda went and listened, unedified and unconvinced. The lecture was given in a large hall crammed with a sympathetic audience. From the first August held it spellbound. The beady-eyed, tallow-faced little man had the curious power many of his betters lack, the power of making a heated appeal to the passions of a crowd and firing it. His lecture was really a tirade against England, coupled with a deification of Germany, and this was naturally a popular theme. Never in her life had Brenda heard such violent invective or such a simple reason given for complicated and far-reaching facts. England had attacked Germany because she was smitten with envy and wished to destroy her most powerful rival. She had land and money, but she had neither a soul nor a mind. Her sons were too depraved and degenerate to fight themselves. They had to pay black and yellow men to fight for them. Their tyranny over the races they

oppressed, their baseness and their despicable frivolity cried to heaven, and heaven itself had ordained their downfall at the hands of the noblest and the mightiest nation that had ever taken the field. The audience was asked to observe that the lecturer spoke of the nation taking the field in brilliant and shame-inflicting contrast with the mercenaries in petticoats and turbans hired by England to murder Germans. God help the heroes who fell into such hands. He would now permit himself, if the audience could bear it, to read a few verses of the patriotic poem that inspired the miserable British troops both when they faced the invincible foe and when they ran away. He had tried in vain to find any inspiration in the words, or a single soul-ennobling idea, or even manly courage.

"Good-bye, Piccadilly; good-bye, Leicester Square!"

He himself had never been in London, but he had heard of these places at midnight, and considered that men standing between life and death should have more serious memories. However, the English could sing what they pleased to-day. To-morrow their conquerors would set the tune. What he begged of his audience to remember, what he imposed on them as a sacred duty, was inextinguishable Hate. Every true German must feel it. Every true German must practice it. England was the enemy. England must go under. Down with England!

The audience certainly enjoyed it and agreed with August: and Brenda, observing this, wondered again what had happened to Germany? Were these people educated if they could believe the stuff and nonsense August preached and their newspapers wrote? and were they civilized if this gospel of hate seized them like a pestilence? Brenda knew as little about history and politics as most young women, but it struck her that the average German opinion was inconsequent.

If Britain possessed the world why did she want to destroy Germany? and if she was going to be easily beaten why did she engender this maniacal hate? How the audience applauded August! How some of them stared at her! When he finished there was a tumult for a moment. Men and women rose to their feet. They sang *Deutschland über Alles.* They shook their fists in imprecation. The song degenerated into a wrangle and a scream. Some began to leave the hall. Others approached the platform. Where Brenda sat with the Erdmanns the throng pressed closer and closer as if it had detected her and meant mischief. For one sickening moment she felt afraid. She had heard the story of the girl who was torn to pieces in a music-hall because she had sung her National Anthem on the eve of war. August had told it with gusto and said that she deserved her fate. Brenda did not in the least want to share her fate, she wondered how she could escape it. She sat as still as a stone and her limbs felt like lead. That man with a red swollen nose and an animal mouth! He had looked at her all through the lecture and was coming close. If he touched her! If others clawed at her! Such things happened. How could any one bear the things that were happening to-day? How could men face bayonets?

"Come with me, Brenda," said Siegmund Abel. He was a big powerfully-made man, and he had edged his way through the crowd until he reached her. He knew that her nationality was unmistakable and he wondered why she had come. He had not been surprised to see hostile glances directed against her, and while August lashed himself and his hearers into a frenzy Siegmund had seen that when the lecture was over she must be got away. Even educated well-dressed people might lose their heads in these times, and the old Erdmanns could not have protected her.

"Why did you come?" he said, as they walked

together to August's house; and Brenda told him how little she had wished to come and how impossible it had been to stay at home.

"You should be in England," said Siegmund. "I shall write to Lothar and say so."

"I wish you would," cried Brenda; and then they reached August's house and were received frigidly by Mina, who had been too busy with supper to attend the lecture.

"But I heard it," she said, "August read it to me. I predicted a great success. What touches my heart will touch other hearts, I told him. We are all one against the common foe. Was there much excitement? Where are the others? Why are you and Brenda here first?"

"I brought Brenda out of it," said Siegmund. "She ought not to have been there at all."

"*Aber,* Siegmund! I cannot understand you. Brenda has married a German. Does not a wife accept her husband's nationality?"

Mina addressed her words to Siegmund and her glance to Brenda: but neither of them spoke. Brenda still felt sick and trembling because those moments before Siegmund Abel came up to her had been horrible. She had read of one against a mob, but she had never even faintly imagined what the one would feel: unwarned and seeing no sign of mercy. She wished she had not felt so frightened though. She had shown neither strength nor courage. She had failed.

XXII

MINA had prepared an extra-special supper and the table was laid for ten persons. She wore the green silk tea-gown and the diamond brooch in which Brenda had first seen her, and her small weak face was hot and red with her exertions. She seldom entertained Elsa and Siegmund because they were "rich people," and she could not pretend to please them with her simple fare. Brenda heard her making apologies in this vein to her brother-in-law before the others arrived and heard him answer without diplomacy that he liked simple fare. Then Mina said in a sad hurt way that she had done her best and basted the hare with sour cream, as she knew he liked it, and that the price of everything just now was hair-raising. Siegmund, to change the subject, said the news was splendid to-day, but Mina, still hurt, said that the wife of a poor professor who did her duty had no time to waste over books and papers. She had been in the kitchen and the nursery since seven o'clock this morning, and August had ordered supper for half-past eight. Everything would be spoiled if he and the others did not come soon.

Then they came; the Erdmanns, August, Elsa and three of August's friends, all in a state of wild excitement. An extra edition of some evening paper had just come out with news of a great victory over the English. They were cut to pieces. They were finished. They were nowhere at all. The Germans were practically in Paris, they had dropped proclama-

tions there and would enter on Sedan Day as the All-Highest had promised. No one noticed Brenda. She sat in a corner of the room where there was not much light and she listened. She said to herself that she would not and could not believe what these people were saying. She wished she could escape from their supper party and lock herself into her own room and think about England. She knew the English were not finished. Was it likely? England! and here was Germany, boasting, hating, sure of conquest. If only she could get away and be in England again.

August was saying something about wine. He was explaining to Elsa that a poor professor could not give his guests French champagne, but that he was going to celebrate the occasion with a good sparkling Moselle. Mina looked decidedly cross because, as she said, supper was on the table and the glasses required for the Moselle were locked up in a cupboard. But of course a superman like August does not give in to a woman however cross she looks. He simply said: "Quick, wife, get out the glasses!" and bustled to the cellar where he kept his best wines. For he was not such a poor professor as Mina pretended. At any rate he could produce a few bottles of good Moselle on such a night as this. He looked as if he wanted a wash and a brush when he came back with them, but Mina did not seem to notice that. She gave a little shriek of dismay because he planted the dusty bottles on the clean white cloth of the supper table, rushed out of the room and returned with a duster. She was too late because when August had set them down they had left their mark: but no one except Mina seemed to mind. Everybody sat down to table in a jovial mood and at first ate *hors-d'œuvre* as hungrily as if there was nothing to follow. They drank a still wine with this course and the next: and two of August's friends drank beer. They said they preferred it.

Brenda had not met many professors yet and she knew that August's friends were not likely to be eminent ones. Two of these were of his caste and frame of mind, but they had no chairs. In fact they were not professors at all but only doctors of this and that, miserably poor, abominably dressed, and not over clean. The third was a fair-haired pleasant-looking man who had a chair at one of the smaller Universities and was only in Berlin on a visit. The supper was given in his honor because long ago August and he had drunk Brüderschaft together, and though life had parted them they had kept up a semblance of friendship by letters. Now they met again there was disillusionment, for August thought that Arthur had become worldly, and Arthur perceived that August had not grown either in light or learning. Some of these things Brenda knew before supper began and some she guessed at before it ended. She sat between Siegmund Abel and one of the learned but incompletely washed ones, and in so far as she talked at all it was to Siegmund, because her neighbor on the other side had discovered instantly that she was English, and opened the ball by observing that the Erdmanns must be extraordinarily broad-minded people to harbor any one of her nationality. It was such a difficult remark to answer that Brenda had looked at him reflectively and then looked away. After all what did he matter? Just a little this evening perhaps, but not a feather-weight if only she could get back to England. Now the great Arthur was beginning to talk about her country and laying down the law. However, he was only bringing the charge of bad cooking and telling some rather amusing stories about his adventures in search of a meal in a London suburb on a Sunday. Mina, still flushed and quite incapable of attending to any conversation, watched the progress round the table of the hare cooked to perfection with some cream and served with salsify and little fried

balls of potato. After the hare came a hazelnut tart which was not in the least like any English tart. Its chief components were a rich light cake, some kind of preserve and whipped cream, flavored with nuts. Mina had ordered it at a confectioner's and paid five marks for it: and though Brenda thought her portion delicious it sent her ideas along the old track, trying to discover which nation really did things best, England or Germany. Mina had been up since seven preparing for this party, and yet when you came to think of it her cook and she together had only cooked a hare and two vegetables. On the other hand the hazelnut tart was better than anything you could buy in England at an ordinary confectioner's, the bread was better than London bread, and the Russian salad, the chief attraction of the *hors-d'œuvre,* had been *köstlich.* No one called it Russian salad now though. No one would allow that anything was English, French or Russian, and Brenda wondered whether Londoners had ceased to ask for German sausage. These trivial reflections were quite out of tune with the elated and bellicose mood of those who had most to say to-night. The voices of August and his friends made themselves heard above the clatter of dishes and Mina's wearying invitations to this one and the other to eat and drink. They talked of nothing but the war; of the huge indemnities to be extracted, of the alterations in the map of Europe, and of the next war, which August said would be with the United States. If you could call it a war with a nation that has neither an army nor a navy. But in August's opinion the possession of the United States and Canada was necessary to the future of Greater Germany. Arthur said he would rather seize the whole of Africa. Brenda's neighbor asked what India had done to be left out. The sparkling Moselle was bubbling in their glasses now, and after drinking Arthur's health they filled up again and went on

talking. They lighted cigars, too, and Mina went to the sideboard to make coffee. Brenda's glass was still nearly full when August rose to his feet and began to make a little speech, in which there was nothing new because he had said it all at greater length in his lecture. He had taken more wine than usual, and there was a spot of red in each sallow cheek. His eyes looked wild and his speech spluttered as he enlarged again on the crimes of England against Germany.

"Down with England!" he shrieked, holding up his brimming glass. "Who drinks with me is my friend," and he glanced straight at Brenda. "Down with England!"

Brenda fixed her eyes steadily on her plate and did not move. She had met August's glance, but had not responded to it in any way. Every one else had risen and was clinking glasses with August in the German way. Even Siegmund Abel had risen, though he had shrugged his shoulders and muttered something Brenda did not hear. Mina had come away from the sideboard and with a silly smile on her face was squeaking "Down with England!" Little Mamma shook her head solemnly as she drank the toast, Papa Erdmann downed England in a hoarse voice and emptied his glass . . .

"Brenda!" screamed August. "Why are you not drinking with us? I demand that you drink with us."

Brenda neither moved nor spoke. She felt very cold as to her hands and feet and very confused as to her mind. Should she continue to sit still and allow these apes to gibber at her, or should she surprise them by dashing to her feet and drinking boldly to England! Perhaps it would be rather theatrical to do that, and at any rate if she sat still she was less likely to break down and cry.

"I demand that you drink with us," said August

again. "Are you not the wife of a German who at this very moment may be lying on the blood-stained battlefield done to death by your cowardly compatriots."

"*Aber,* Brenda!" mewed Mina reproachfully.

"My poor boy!" moaned Little Mamma.

"Do not excite yourself, Mamachen," said Elsa; "I implore you not to excite yourself. Lothar we know is in Brussels."

"I give you another toast," said Siegmund Abel, "one that Brenda can drink with us. May Lothar come safely back to his family!"

"Yes, I will drink that," said Brenda, getting up and looking gratefully at Siegmund. When she had touched her glass she tried to catch the eye of Little Mamma, but Frau Erdmann shot a baleful glance at her daughter-in-law and said in an audible undertone to August—

"My poor boy! that I should live to see his wife side with his enemies!"

"I beg you not to excite yourself, wife," said Herr Erdmann in his dictatorial voice. "What is done cannot be undone."

"I thought that Lothar had married his cousin," whispered the great Arthur to Elsa. "I had a card announcing his engagement . . . I don't remember the lady's name."

"It was Müller," said Elsa.

"Müller!"

"Yes. They are cousins."

"But then the lady is German."

"Her parents are . . . but only by blood."

"Isn't blood everything?"

"It seems to be nothing in these cases," said Elsa snappishly.

Brenda could hear every word of this dialogue across the narrow dinner-table, and she observed an alteration in the great Arthur's manner that she had

observed in other Germans when she had claimed blood kinship with them. Her value was lowered in his eyes. He thought less of her because she was not sheer English, and his change of front had nothing to do with her opinions, but proceeded from the curious contradictory attitude of the Anglophobe German towards the English, an attitude finding its counterpart in the compound of appreciation and bitter grudge felt by the plebeian for the patrician: a compound that may manifest itself in a lower nature forced to recognize a higher one just as often as in the class war that depends on such external benefits as birth and property.

The rest of the evening passed quickly. The whole party went into August's book-lined study for half an hour and then dispersed. Little Mamma said something as she bid good-bye about next Thursday, and Brenda put her foot into it by asking what was going to happen next Thursday. "*Aber,* Brenda!" mewed Mina, and Brenda wondered what crime she had committed now, and whether that little fool Mina could not hit on some variety of remonstrance. Then she reproached herself because this time she really had committed a crime and forgotten that next Thursday would be Little Mamma's birthday, when every member of the family and many friends would send her flowers and other offerings, in return for which she would regale them with chocolate and cakes in the afternoon. It was always a great day in the Joachimstrasse, and last year Lothar, saying that he detested family reunions, had paid his mother a brief call early in the morning and avoided the house for the rest of the day. He could always plead urgent service.

"It cannot be a joyous occasion this year," moaned Little Mamma. "I shall miss my *lieber Junge,* who is always so attentive to his old mother and never forgets an anniversary. Last year he arrived quite

early in the morning with a magnificent bouquet of carnations, my favorite flower. I reproached him with his extravagance, but he replied that nothing could be too good for me. He was always so deeply attached to his family."

Brenda, hearing all this, could not help remembering what had really happened last year. Prompted by Elsa, she had reminded Lothar of his mother's birthday, and with considerable difficulty persuaded him to take the carnations she herself had bought for Frau Erdmann. But this is not a world in which the truth can always be made plain, and she went back this evening with two elderly people who were less friendly to her than they had ever been before. As the week went on this attitude became more marked and Brenda's consequent discomfort more acute. Sedan Day came and went with no news of the fall of Paris; but the triumphant march of the army to the very gates of Paris was watched with intense pride and excitement. When the news came that Amiens was in German hands no one doubted that in the west the worst of the struggle was over. From the east the news was not so good, but every one hoped that the Russians could be dealt with later. On the whole the family met in a triumphant mood at the Joachimstrasse on Thursday. August had just watched the arrival of a large number of English prisoners, and was rubbing his hands with pleasure over their miserable appearance. To be sure they had not had a comfortable journey! He had managed to get into conversation with a railway official, who took his view that these cattle should be treated like cattle or worse. For beasts were worth money, but English pig-dogs were better dead than alive. He could not understand why good German food should be wasted on them. They had traveled, he was told, in cattle trucks that no one had troubled to clean, wounded and unwounded in a crowd together. They had looked as hungry as

wolves and the wounded ones were clamoring for water. Pig-dogs!

"Did you give them water?" asked Brenda.

"I! Why should I?" and August looked round at the united family, calling for a chorus to his solo; and inviting it to denounce the enemy in their midst.

The large room had a gala appearance this afternoon. There was a "birthday" table on which the presents were arrayed, but so many flowers had come that these had been placed wherever they looked well in Little Mamma's opinion. The presents were perhaps not as costly as usual because in war-time money was scarce with most people; but Herr Erdmann had given his wife a handsome set of furs, and Elsa had brought her mother a small fitted dressing-case that she said Frau Erdmann would find useful when she went to Italy in the spring. Mina, the poor Professor's wife, only produced an embroidered cushion, and there had been a painful little scene because Frau Erdmann, in her honest German way, had said that her own child ought to know that those moldy art reds were not her taste at all. However, the children had not only made her Kindergarten straw photograph frames, but they had stood on hassocks and been coaxed to declaim birthday poems composed by August and charged with family and patriotic sentiment. It was just as the second came to an end that the chambermaid appeared, saying that a wooden case had arrived from the railway on which there was something to pay. Herr Erdmann went out to see about it and returned with a large flat wooden case that, in a voice striving vainly to be calm, he said came from Brussels.

"My Lothar!" exclaimed Frau Erdmann, clasping her hands. "He has remembered his old mother on her birthday."

"*Aber*, Mamma!" cried Mina, "could you doubt that he would? Let us hope that he has not chosen the wrong red."

"It is evidently a picture," said Elsa.

The whole family crowded round the case while Herr Erdmann, assisted by the chambermaid and advised by August, got it open. Then some newspapers were removed and then Herr Erdmann, looking blankly at his wife, handed her first a pink and then a tangerine yellow silk petticoat—and such petticoats, of a tube-like narrowness, but yet elaborately trimmed with lace and frills.

"The dear boy!" said Frau Erdmann. "How did such an idea come into his head?"

But Herr Erdmann, like a conjurer performing with a silk hat, was now pulling the most amazing mixture of things out of the box, so that every one watching grew on edge with curiosity as to what would come next. Beneath the petticoats there had been a layer of ladies' nightgowns made of the finest lawn and embroidered: and then numbers of packages, each one wrapped up in some article of lingerie. There were three small clocks, a pair of Cloisonné vases which Elsa said must be valuable, a whole Sèvres tea-service, toilet articles of tortoiseshell with a gold monogram and coronet, and carefully sealed, a tin box, which when opened was seen to be full of trinket cases and silver spoons.

After the first chorus of exclamations and delight some people watching had turned rather silent. Then when the picture, cut out of its frame and covering the bottom of the box, was taken out every one began to chatter again. Meanwhile Brenda had made two discoveries that in her innocence surprised her. The lingerie had not come straight from any shop. It had been worn, and the monogram on it and on the tortoiseshell brushes and boxes was not Little Mamma's monogram. Moreover, a year of their income, probably two or three years of their income, would not have paid for the things Lothar had sent.

"War is war!" announced August.

"Here is a letter," said Little Mamma, who had been rummaging in the box of spoons and trinkets. "He says I am to keep what I please and give the rest to Elsa and Mina. He does not mention Brenda, but he adds that he has looked after himself and sent things to his own address. How generous he is to give us so much. The dear boy!"

"I have always been short of spoons," bleated Mina.

XXIII

BRENDA had often passed through Brussels station, and once she had stayed a night in the town and just had time before going on to walk up and down the rue Royale, look at the shops and buy some gloves and chocolate. So she remembered Brussels chiefly by its main street of shops, by its tall white houses with carefully curtained windows and by a comfortable hotel. But she remembered the station itself best because she had often waited an hour or two there, and when she saw it swarming with German soldiers, she had some insight for the first time into what the war must mean to Belgium. Lothar met her, and the first thing she noticed about him was a half-healed scar on his cheek, a scar oddly barred as if a weapon like Britannia's trident had made it. She asked no questions, for he did not meet her with any show of affection, and he was evidently quite well. He was also evidently out of humor. She knew very little of what he had been doing since he left Berlin, and she had not had a single letter from him until two days ago, when she had received a brief note telling her to come to Brussels at once and bring clothes for a long stay. She was glad to leave Berlin, and inasmuch as Brussels was on the way to England she was glad to go there. But she wondered why Lothar had written, until she showed his letter to the Erdmanns who then informed her that it was at their instigation. They had decided that her presence had a deleterious effect on Little Mamma's nerves, and

that as their son had unhappily married one of his country's enemies he must be responsible for her conduct in war-time.

"August says it is simply dangerous," added Little Mamma. "If the Russians came, which God forbid, you might assist them."

"If I even suspected such a thing it would be my duty to shoot you dead," said Herr Erdmann.

"We have never had a scandal in the family," wailed Little Mamma. "I shouldn't like it at all."

"I shouldn't like it either," said Brenda, and packed her trunks. She had to go to her own flat for some of the winter clothes she wanted, and she found that the room in which she had said good-bye to Andrew Lovel revived her memories of that parting too acutely for her peace of mind. She wondered what he was doing, whether he had gone back to New Zealand or whether he had joined the new army, at which the Germans poked all their heaviest and most malevolent fun. She wondered whether they would ever meet again, and whether she would ever live in this flat with Lothar again. She still supposed the war would be over in a few weeks' time, and she knew nothing about the real issues of the Battle of the Marne. She saw that Siegmund Abel took the situation seriously, but August persuaded the rest of the family that Siegmund was old-fashioned. He still believed in Bismarck, who had feared a coalition and had had no colonial policy. August knew that the nations opposed to them were all degenerates, and that Germany must spread herself in Asia and Africa or perish. Brenda did not even attempt to say good-bye to August. Whatever terrors Brussels held it would not hold him, and she thought that in leaving him behind she left all she detested most in modern Germany.

But as she drove out of the station with Lothar she saw Germany in Brussels everywhere and Germany beside her, domineering and truculent. The driver

took a wrong turn and tried to explain that he had not understood what Lothar said: and Lothar fell upon him as if he had been an offending dog, abusing him in guttural French so that Brenda wondered the man did not stop his cab and refuse to take them a yard farther.

"Are you staying at an hotel?" she asked when they drove on.

"No. I am sharing a flat with the Prasslers."

"With the Prasslers?"

"Yes. Have you any objection?"

"If I had known it I would not have come," said Brenda.

"What would you have done? Gone to an internment camp? My family would not be responsible for you any longer."

Brenda could say nothing more just then because the cab stopped at one of the tall white houses in a residential street and Lothar got out. He gave orders about the luggage and then, looking as black as thunder, he stalked upstairs, leaving his wife to carry her dressing-case and follow him. By the time she reached the second floor the door had been opened and a maid-servant stood there to receive her. So did Lothar, and without speaking he ushered her into a room at which five or six officers sat at supper with Frau Prassler. Brenda had been traveling all day and wished she could back out again before these roysterers saw her. This word for them came into her mind as she went slowly forward, receiving swift confused impressions of light, wine, loud laughter, dishes heaped with fruit, Frau Prassler sheathed in red, her hair done in a coil on each ear, her husband flushed with wine already, and five men clattering to their feet to receive the newcomer.

"Ah! our little Englishwoman!" said Frau Prassler, and she too got up rather slowly and lazily as if the effort was hardly worth while. "We have not waited

you see. Trains are often unpunctual still. You will sit down with us as you are, will you not? or would that offend your English ideas?"

Brenda was not a saint by any means. She had human infirmities of temper and an eye for the feline in her own sex. Her dislike of the beautiful Jutta was active and healthy, and the idea of being under the same roof with her insufferable. She said something about washing off the dust after her long journey, and, turning to Lothar, told him that she wished to see her room.

"Why not sit down as Frau Prassler suggests?" began Lothar; but his wife for once paid no attention to him. She went out of the room and he followed her.

"This is your room," he said, opening the door. "You are not going to make a great toilet, I suppose. Every one knows that you have been traveling."

Brenda did not make what Lothar called a great toilet, but when she went into the dining-room again she looked as fresh as paint and as young as spring. Major Prassler told her so in set phrases, and all the other men except Lothar paid her attention. They were none of them drunk, but they were just the other side of sober, inclined to talk a great deal, rather red in the face and excitable. One of them asked her what people were saying in Berlin? Were they as pleased as they ought to be by the conquest of Belgium or were they too stupid and ignorant to understand what had been done?

"Have you conquered all Belgium?" said Brenda. "What about Antwerp?"

"We shall have Antwerp."

"And Paris?"

"Paris certainly. Do you doubt it?"

"And Calais?"

"Calais is necessary to us for our operations against England. But you have not answered my questions about Berlin?"

"It isn't easy to answer for a whole city," said Brenda. "I saw very few people except one night at a lecture."

"Whose lecture?" said Lothar, joining in. "What was it about?"

"It was about the crimes of England," said Brenda. "August gave it. He explained that England had engineered the war in order to destroy the commercial and intellectual supremacy of Germany. He had a great success."

"He deserved it since he told the truth," said Frau Prassler.

Brenda was watching a pear that Major Prassler was peeling for her. She would much rather have peeled it herself, but that his sense of chivalry would not allow, he said. Every now and then he touched the pear, and his hands, though not exactly dirty, were not exactly clean either. She had spoken of August's lecture in a level voice without anger or derision; and that seemed to anger her audience.

"You do not agree with the lecturer," said one man who was older than the others: a man with a heavy chin and a low brutal forehead.

"Are you going to ask a young woman her opinion of war and politics?" cried Lothar with a loud jeering laugh. "How can it matter what women think, especially Englishwomen? They will dance to our tune when we get over there, as the Belgians have done."

"Frightful," said Frau Prassler with an affected little shudder. "War is frightful!"

Brenda did not notice what she said because when Lothar had spoken the byplay of two young lieutenants sitting opposite her attracted attention. They had both been drinking a good deal, and had put off the reserve of manner usual amongst civilized men when women are present. They sprawled on their chairs, they picked their teeth, and at the mention of Belgian

women they leered at each other like satyrs. Then one of them with a hiccup and a laugh went through a little pantomime that wrote itself on Brenda's understanding corrosively. He looked across the table at Lothar, he winked at his friend, and with three fingers stretched like the prongs of Britannia's trident he clawed at his face. Then a maid came in with coffee, and Brenda looked at her with interest because she was a Belgian woman. But she met the girl's eyes and looked away again. You do not stare into the living eyes of tragedy incarnate.

The evening was finished in a salon that had obviously been stripped of its pictures, smaller furniture and knickknacks. Even the curtains were gone, although the upholstered canopies showed that they must have been of a heavy pale-blue silk brocade. There was a grand piano in the room on which one of the lieutenants began to play melodies from "The Merry Widow," and there was a large pouf of brocade cushions on which several of the other officers subsided. As they smoked they shook off their cigar ash on the cushions. Frau Prassler sat in an easy-chair that suggested a throne because it occupied a central position and had smaller chairs grouped near it. Lothar and the older man, who was an Oberst, both sat at her feet, and engaged with her and the men on the pouf in a general conversation. The Oberst got very heated as he talked, and presently he took a penknife from his pocket, opened it and emphasized what he was saying by slashing at the brocaded arm of an empty chair close by. When he began to do this Frau Prassler drew it out of his reach, and said it was going with other things to Berlin when she had finished with the flat. The Oberst apologized, and said that he thought she had collected all she wanted, and that he considered it his duty to destroy enemy property as completely as possible. Brussels was now a German city, but he supposed that after the war some of the

Belgian beasts would be allowed to come back, and then the less they found the better. Brenda sat a little way off, listening to the music, hearing what was said, watching the conquerors. She felt ill at ease amongst them and in a sense afraid. They had big coarse bodies, and loud guttural voices; they were ruthless and greedy; they were roystering and unashamed. Lothar for instance had both hardened and deteriorated. Perhaps as a soldier active service had exhibited his efficiency, but it had certainly added to his arrogance, and swept away ordinary restraints. There was something about him and about the other officers that she could only think of as something unchained. They had bloodshot eyes and reckless loud manners. In spite of the iron discipline that fetters them they were in a fever with memories of bloodshed about which she dared not think. The little lieutenant had left off strumming now. What a silly vacant face he had, what a fatuous smile! and how often she had met his like in Berlin, lions amongst the ladies. He was certainly the worse for liquor, and as he stumbled across the room towards the open fireplace Frau Prassler's cold eyes followed him derisively, and she said in a low voice to Lothar that the little man had to leave for the front to-night and evidently did not like the idea. As she spoke a crash of broken glass startled every one in the room and sent the older men to their feet in a fury. The little lieutenant had seized a stool and, before any one could stop him, had smashed the legs of it into the large mirror over the fireplace.

"*Deutschland über Alles,*" he screamed, and with a foolish cackle sank upon the nearest chair. The Oberst spoke to him sternly. Such things were not done in the presence of German ladies, he said.

"She isn't German," said the little hero, pointing a finger at Brenda. "She's English. I'll ask her for a kiss!"

Brenda did not stop to see how the older men dealt with him. She fled to her own room and locked the door. Presently she heard prolonged and noisy departures. Then the blessed peace of night came and she fell asleep, wondering whether after all Brussels in war-time was going to be any improvement on Berlin. Next day when she was nearly dressed Lothar came in to her and explained that she would have nothing to do with the housekeeping. They were to be the paying guests of the Prasslers.

"It is not an arrangement that I shall like," said Brenda plainly. "I am surprised that you have made it."

"Be surprised then. Do you suppose that I mean to study your likes and dislikes? If you are not satisfied with what I arrange you can try an internment camp. I'm in no mood for argument. You are a visible danger to me. You are a hindrance to my career. I would give a thousand pounds if I had never married you."

Brenda looked at Lothar and then turned her eyes away because the morning light fell with cruel exposure on those barred lines scarring his face. They were not healed yet and she wondered if they were painful, but she could not ask him about them. Besides, her thoughts were groping for an answer to what he had just said and found none.

"I should be less visible if I were in England," she suggested after a prolonged silence.

"How do you propose to get there?"

"I am a British subject."

"Nothing of the kind. You are the wife of a German officer. If they caught you in England, they'd shoot you for a spy."

"I'd risk that," said Brenda.

"You don't believe it?"

"We don't shoot women and children in England."

"How do you know what the pig-dogs do in war-time?"

"I know the pig-dogs," said Brenda.

Lothar hammered on the nearest table with his fist and said he would not be ridiculed by any woman, least of all by his wife, and that if she were going to behave in this way she should return to Berlin by the next train. He then explained ponderously that he might speak of the English as pig-dogs because he believed they were pig-dogs; but she might not because she did it in derision of him.

"I see your point of view," said Brenda; but that morning whatever she said seemed to irritate him, and she was glad when he had to leave her to attend to his work. She had breakfast by herself in the dining-room, then she unpacked one of her trunks and then, seeing no reason against it, she went out for a walk. It was a hot glorious September day, and she wore a white gown and a plain straw hat, and she said to herself, as she pinned on her hat before a glass, that every one must see that she was an English pig-dog. She decided on that account that she would keep near home. However, as chance would have it, she did not even get to the end of the long deserted street into which she emerged. She had hardly walked half-way down it when a seedy-looking man, who must have been hiding under one of the archways into the old courtyards, walked beside her, and in a hoarse insinuating voice said—

"Madame is English!"

Brenda walked on, trying to take no notice, but the man kept close to her and in a whisper that quavered with fright said—

"What would Madame give for a number of 'The Times' containing a full description of the destruction of Louvain?"

"How much do you want?" said Brenda, stopping short.

"I want twenty francs," said the man.

"Twenty francs for a copy of 'The Times'?"

"I know some one who would give me fifty, but he is suspected. I fear to go near him."

"What do you fear?" said Brenda, and looking at the man again, she decided that he was pitiable and not in any sense dangerous. What did he fear? What did he know? What would she find in that copy of "The Times" when she had bought it? What horror lay behind the hopeless sorrow in the eyes of the little Belgian maid? That pantomime she had surprised at table yesterday! That wound on Lothar's cheek! and his bloodshot eyes! "What do you fear?" she said again, and the man, seeing that she was English, unloosed his tongue.

In the shadow of an old archway, secure from eavesdroppers, sheltered from the midday sun, Brenda stayed for nearly half an hour, hearing from Belgian lips of the deeds done in Belgium. The man convinced her in spite of his seedy clothes and his extortions. He came from Ardenne, where they shot down old men with machine guns, burnt young men alive, bayoneted women with child, dismembered young girls and children . . . he was a common man, plain of speech, and he did not spare Brenda when she turned white and sick. His common insensitive mind thought that what his countryfolk had borne in the flesh she could hear of and swear to avenge. She fled from him when she could endure it no longer, and ran upstairs, "The Times" in her hand. Luckily Siegmund Abel had seen that she brought some Belgian money with her and she had been able to buy the paper. She had no latchkey, so she rang, and the little Belgian maid opened the door. Brenda looked at her.

"Madame is ill!" said the little maid, lifting her miserable eyes to the English lady's deathlike face. Brenda drew the girl with her into her room and shut the door.

"Where do you come from?" she asked her.

"Madame, my home was at Haecht."

"What has happened there?"

The girl told her, without tears. Brenda saw that she was beyond tears. She told the same story as the shabby hawker in the street had told; a story of hellish cruelty and lust. The whole family had perished in that orgy; her parents, a married sister and three younger children. The youngest of all, a boy of three, had been found crucified to the door of the barn. The parents had been burned alive in their house. The married sister who had been with child. . . .

Brenda put out her hands as if she could bear no more, and then before she could stop the girl her thought changed. She took the crazed creature into her arms and tried to comfort her, while at the back of her own mind the livid scar on Lothar's face pictured itself, ominous and betraying.

XXIV

BRENDA found that the copy of "The Times" she had bought did not contain the promised accounts of the destruction of Louvain, but a column called "The Infamy of Louvain," describing the treatment of civilians sent as prisoners to Germany. She knew later that English people, reading this and similar descriptions, hardly believed them; but she believed because she could see the type of German official, stupid and enraged, who could order and carry out these cruelties. Nothing she had heard to-day surprised her as much as it would have surprised her a year ago when her conception of Germany was made up of poetry and tradition. When August had gloated over the ill-treatment of English prisoners the women of the family had listened callously. When some Frankfurt ladies, showing a spark of human feeling, had given French wounded coffee and cigars a Berlin paper had published a coarse scurrilous poem about them, saying that they ought to be horsewhipped. It is impossible to tell you completely how Brenda's ideas of Germany had changed since her marriage, because it had been a gradual process, culminating in the spectacle of Germany at war, its passions unloosed, its brutalities allowed full play. What shocked her most was that the better part of the nation made no protest. It was either servile or blind.

Her own position became more and more perplexing. Lothar did not want her here and his family did

not want her in Berlin. Yet, in her opinion, her place was here with her husband, since he had refused to let her go to England. At the same time a husband who is publicly indifferent and unfaithful is an impossible companion. Even Brenda with her rigid, unthought-out ideas of marriage recognized that. When she had read "The Times" she sat in her own room for some time and tried to see her way more clearly. She sat there safe and sound, the sun shining in upon a pleasant, well-furnished room; and that was part of the great tragedy that encompassed her, but had not rent her yet. She occupied the room at the expense of some innocent victims driven out of it. Through the open window came the sound of martial music and of marching troops, going forth perhaps to burn and pillage and murder. She had grown to womanhood in a quiet, happy home, reading here and there of bloody deeds but never expecting to be near them. Now whole nations were near them, the oppressors and the oppressed both suffering. For she had seen the Berlin hospitals full of wounded men and the Berlin streets crowded with miserable-looking refugees from East Prussia. The Russians had taken Lemberg, she read in "The Times," but the English were in retreat, fighting like lions against fearful odds. How can men die better? And in the Bight of Heligoland there had been a naval victory. She wondered in what way the German papers and August would turn it into an English defeat; and she hoped that however the tide of battle rolled her country would never gloss over a defeat or exaggerate a victory. That would be unworthy, and in this hour of peril and of trial England must rise to her own greatness. How Brenda longed to be there, to hear the English tongue again, to see what the English were doing, to find some little corner where even she could work and help!

A knock at the door! and without waiting for a

"Come in," the beautiful Jutta walked into the room, as usual the glass of fashion, in a gown of shot taffetas, a close hat with a prancing osprey, light gloves and an *en tout cas* with a jade handle. She had got herself up like a Parisian fashion plate, and yet no one could take her for anything but a German. She had the German mouth and smile, thought Brenda, unmistakable and indescribable; and she had the German way of spoiling her turnout by something unsuitable and incongruous. Why with a green and purple taffetas did she wear brogued shoes of a screaming mustard yellow? It was impossible to associate sorrow or tragedy with the beautiful Jutta. She stood for success: hard, selfish success at any cost to others. Perhaps after all she was a type of the Germany that had turned Europe into a shambles to gain its own ends. She bid Brenda good morning with her eyes on the English newspaper, she said that she was going out to lunch, and she seemed to take for granted that Brenda would stay at home.

"Will Lothar be in to lunch?" said Brenda.

"I have not ordered it for him. May I ask where you found that copy of 'The Times'?"

"I bought it in the street."

"You have been out . . . by yourself?"

"Why not?"

Frau Prassler gave a little shrug of the shoulders, as if it was not her business, and with a word of apology for hurrying away left the room. When Brenda went into lunch she was surprised to find Major Prassler at table, eating heartily but in a state of anger and excitement that was embarrassing.

"Where is my wife?" he said. "With your husband as usual, I suppose?"

Brenda hardly knew whether to laugh or cry. The big red-faced man looked so much annoyed that she felt sorry for him; and she felt sorry for herself, too; but she did not know what she could say to pacify

him. However, he spoke again and changed the subject.

"There is bad news," he said. "I am off to-night. I want Jutta to go back to Berlin. She ought never to have come. Who wants women about in a war area? They are simply a nuisance. You had better go back with her."

"What is the news?" said Brenda, on tiptoe to hear; for anything he called bad news would rejoice her, while his good news would cast her down. Perhaps this occurred to him, for he glanced at her sourly and only said that a great battle was raging on the Aisne. The issue was still uncertain.

"Will Lothar go to-night?" asked Brenda.

"Lothar! Not that I know of. He has a different job now. Didn't you know?"

"I have never known much about Lothar's work," said Brenda.

The Major grunted and gobbled, but said nothing articulate. Brenda wondered what was happening at the front and how she could get any trustworthy news. She felt too restless and anxious to stay at home. If she went out she could watch people's faces, hear their talk and buy more papers. Why should she not go out, since she looked like a pig-dog? The Belgians would feel friendly to her, and she supposed that even the Boches would not murder her in the streets of Brussels, unless they had orders to destroy and slay as they had done in Louvain. She must risk that.

There were a great many soldiers about certainly, and some of them looked like the Major, excited and perturbed. She thought that some of the Belgians looked excited, too, but she could not feel sure. They were not standing about in groups or talking to each other, and many of them looked dejected and preoccupied. The papers she bought told her of German victories and the imminent fall of Paris. She found

herself close to a public park before long, and sat down in a shady seat to read. She did not know the name of the park; she had not a friend in Brussels, for she could not count Lothar a friend. She wondered whether English people were allowed to leave the city and whether she could go with them. She wondered whether the Allies were near and would soon retake Brussels? Major Prassler had certainly been in a state of intense excitement, and it was about the war news. She did not think he minded much about his wife. There they were, Lothar and the beautiful Jutta, promenading towards her, not exactly hand-in-hand but openly devoted and adoring. Brenda knew how Lothar looked when he was in love, and that long glance of covetous appreciation. Should she sit still or run away? Had they seen her?

If they had they showed no sign of it but walked slowly past her, absorbed in each other. Brenda, feeling bewildered and dejected, made her way slowly back to the flat, the loneliest creature surely in the city. What would happen next in this new cataclysmic world, she wondered. Who would go, who stay, who live, who die? Nothing seemed certain except that her marriage had become a farce and that her personal sorrows were of small account in the general welter of blood and lust quite close to her—as close as those scars on her husband's inflamed face. How could the beautiful Jutta see them and laugh into his eyes as she had done this afternoon? In what struggle had they been inflicted and what penalty had been paid? Brenda knew that Lothar had been in Louvain, and in villages on the way to Louvain. What were his memories when his eyes met Jutta's with that warmth in them? and what remained of a marriage as miserably dissolved as his in a world going under by flame and sword?

Brenda tried to read when she got back to the flat, but found that she could not. Before long Major

Prassler returned in a hurry of preparation for his departure; and then his wife and Lothar came, too, complacent and content. News had come through of a German rally on the Aisne. All was going well again and Major Prassler would be marching into Paris before many days. So said Jutta. But the men took the situation more seriously. The Major exhorted his wife to return to Berlin at once, but she derided his anxieties and said that she was as safe here as there. She promised to clear out at the least sign of danger; but, as he knew, they were living here rent free, while in Berlin they would have to pay through the nose for everything.

"But you have your own flat there," said Brenda.

"We have let that to a rich man from Königsberg who is afraid of the Russians," said Jutta.

"I wish we could have let ours," said Lothar. "We never do anything so sensible."

Brenda could not understand the Major. He did not seem to care much whether his wife stayed here or went home. After he had advised her to go to Berlin he seemed to think he had done all he need do and talked entirely of himself and of the food and wine he wanted sent after him. There was good wine in the cellar belonging to the flat, and he was going to divide it with Lothar. Some champagne was opened just before he started and his health drunk in it. Lothar went with him to the barracks from which his regiment was to start and came back with some additional instructions about wine. The beautiful Jutta heaved a sigh and murmured something about the poor good man, might Heaven spare him, and then settled down to a game of cards with Lothar. Brenda tried to read a novel, but found her attention wandered to the pair sitting in close communion on a small brocaded seat that just held them. Considering that she was in the room she thought the most elementary code of manners might have directed them to show

more restraint. But the woman ogled the man and the man made sheep's eyes at the woman, while their voices, if not their actual words, proclaimed their intimacy. At last, though it was only nine o'clock, Brenda got up and went to bed. They answered her good night with brazen indifference and hardly looked up from their game.

During the next fortnight life pressed hard on Brenda, so that she looked here and there like a hunted creature for some way of escape. Her position had become intolerable, for neither Lothar nor Jutta considered her in any way. At home they flaunted their intimacy in her face and abroad her presence gave them security. She thought that every one who came to the house understood the true state of things and derided her acquiescence in it. Yet what could she do? Remonstrance with Lothar was worse than useless. It roused him to fury. He regarded her as wholly in his power, an encumbrance, and a critic; in each guise a thing to trample on. So he trampled in the time-honored way, shouting, stamping, cursing her and her country, painting victory red. When these violent scenes had left Brenda shaken and defeated Jutta would make bad worse by her airs towards Lothar of sympathy and possession. She was so sorry for the poor man and so glad that he had her to console him. She pictured herself married to an Englishman in this great hour and understood how Lothar must suffer from his wife's obstinate want of duty. For in Jutta's opinion it was a woman's duty to accept her husband's nationality at any cost to her own feelings. If she had married an Englishman she would now be English. Yet, as she said this she shuddered, for it sounded blasphemous.

She was an evil woman. After being under her heel for a fortnight Brenda had to recognize this though it upset ancient theories about good in every one and your power of appeal to it. She could find

no good in Jutta anywhere; at any rate evil overlaid good and made her dangerous. She had the whip hand of Brenda and that did not awake her generosity. She knew neither shame nor mercy. The little Belgian maid feared and hated her, but knew of no other roof to her head. She constantly came to Brenda for advice and comfort in her troubles, half understanding that Brenda was in something of the same case. One day they met outside and went together to see some members of a family who had escaped from the German fury in Louvain. The little maid had once lived with them as their servant, for they had been prosperous tradespeople with a comfortable house. Now no one was left but the wife, who was recovering from a bayonet wound in her side, and one child who had been badly burnt. They were penniless but were being nursed by some relatives in Brussels. Brenda stayed with the woman for an hour and heard her story. She had seen her daughter in the hands of drunken soldiers and knew that she was dead. Her husband had been shot as he tried to help her out of their burning house, and her son, badly wounded, had been sent in a cattle truck to Germany. She did not know whether he was dead or alive. Their friends, their neighbors, people above them and below them socially had suffered with them. Nearly every one the woman knew in Louvain and elsewhere had been clawed by the wild beasts let loose on their homes. Brenda had not thought such horrors were possible in the modern world. The nation always boasting of its culture and its strength had used its strength to commit abominations in the sight of the Lord; and their Cæsar took the Lord's name in vain as a mantle to his crimes. As the Lord liveth there must be judgment on them for these infamies. Brenda went out from the woman's house with a bowed head and a heavy heart; and found herself edged from the pavement by a group of officers, swaggering towards her

with no idea of making room. Their voices were loud, their laughter grated on her nerves. There was no judgment on these devils. Hell was paramount and the weak might go to the wall.

In a mood wrought of despondency and burning wrath she went back to the flat to find Lothar waiting for her with a scowling face.

"Where have you been?" he thundered.

"To see a child who was burnt and a woman who was bayoneted at Louvain," she said, standing up to him because her anger gave her force.

"Damn Louvain! What is Louvain to you?" said Lothar. "Go and pack your trunks."

Brenda's first thought and hope when he startled her by saying this, was of a German defeat and evacuation of Brussels. She laughed in his face because she was still thinking of the woman she had just seen and of Louvain. "Are you driven back?" she said. "Are the French and English coming?"

She thought he would strike her and moved back involuntarily; but not far. So they stood facing each other, he furiously angry and she flouting him because he had been at Louvain and had those weals on his face. If he struck her or killed her she would not suffer as those women of Louvain had from such men as this.

"What's the matter with you?" he said, watching her face.

"I've been hearing about Louvain from a woman who was there; and you were there."

"Of course I was there."

"Everywhere women and children have been murdered as they were at Cawnpore—no, worse than there, for they have been tortured. The English have never forgotten Cawnpore."

"Damn the English!"

"Perhaps you will be dead when it is all over. But for those of you who are not dead it will be a horrible

world because we shall all remember. You will be unclean."

"What do you suppose the top dog cares about the under dog's grievances?" jeered Lothar. "Go and pack a small trunk. I can't do with you here any longer. I'm going to risk it and take you to England."

"To England!" Brenda's heart leaped with hope and thankfulness.

"On one condition, and remember that my life depends on it. But perhaps as I've been in Louvain my life isn't safe in your hands," and he caricatured her voice of horror when she had spoken of Louvain.

"What is the condition?"

"That you hold your tongue. I shall be in mufti and we shall travel as Americans."

"But how can you?"

"No questions. Either you come to England with me to-night or you go to an internment camp in Berlin. I can't stand the sight of you. Besides, I may have a mission anywhere and Jutta doesn't want you. When the war is over we can rearrange things. If old Prassler is killed you can divorce me. You've only an hour to pack up."

XXV

THEY crossed from Ostend to Dover. As long as German soldiers and officials stopped them Lothar showed German papers. When they got amongst the Belgians Lothar had two passports that seemed to satisfy every one. He refused to show them to Brenda, who, as the night went on, was beginning to recover from the daze and flurry of their sudden departure. The little Belgian maid had wept bitterly when she saw Brenda pack her trunk, and had wanted to go with her to England. So Brenda gave her money enough for her journey, and told her to come if she liked and could get permission to leave. It was impossible to wait for her or to propose taking her. Lothar was not in an amiable mood. He hardly spoke to Brenda as they traveled, and though he watched her closely he paid no attention to her comfort.

"Is it safe for you to go to England?" she asked him when they were by themselves for a short time in a first-class compartment.

"Why not? Unless you betray me?"

"I shall not do that; but you don't look American."

"What do I look in your opinion?"

"German."

It was very odd and puzzling, thought Brenda. After living a whole year in Germany she could not explain it. Although all Germans would assure you

that they were the salt of the earth she had never met one yet who liked to hear that he was a recognizable German. She ought not to have irritated Lothar in this way she knew, but there was something so inexplicable in their blend of national conceit and want of national dignity that she always felt inclined to probe it. Lothar turned as red as beetroot and glared at her when she said he looked German, but she really thought that to land in Dover in those clothes would endanger him. She did not quite know what it was that marked them. They were sober in color and cheap looking. So was his dark-brown squash hat. Yet she saw the German in those clothes as plainly as she had often seen German lettering spell English words on goods made in Germany.

"I should not be afraid to travel by myself from Ostend," she went on. "Have you taken our tickets to London?"

He did not answer her; but she perceived that he was annoyed by her solicitude and by her questions. Her thoughts became busier than before with the reasons for his journey and the problem of his reception in London. Would he expect to stay with her parents and would they shelter an alien enemy? and could he break their bread now that he had told Brenda outright of his unfaithfulness? She was going home a broken woman, whose husband hated the sight of her. He wanted a divorce. She would have to tell her father and mother these things, she supposed, and give them great pain: or could she await the fortunes of war and see if time brought changes? As the Germans made war no one knew who would live or die, for they made war on women and children as ruthlessly as on armed men. They would burn London to ashes if they could and every one in it.

"I shall have to speak to my parents of our own affairs," she said suddenly. "We had better come

to an understanding about that, Lothar, if you are coming home with me."

"I am not coming home with you," he said; "do you take me for a fool? If I could trust your parents I couldn't trust the servants."

Again Brenda wondered why in that case he insisted on going to England with her. It was impossible to believe that any chivalrous care for her safety kept him at her side. He showed positive antagonism and dislike whenever he spoke to her, and she knew that when he had said he hated the sight of her he had told the brutal truth. Woman-like she blamed the other woman. Jutta had not been content to win him from her and leave in him some measure of regard for his wife. She had never ceased to work on his patriotism and infect him with her own beast of prey propensities; he was to feel neither regret nor shame in his repudiation of an Englishwoman. Henceforward life together would be ridiculous and irksome. In spite of her apparent gentleness Brenda had not proved malleable under the German hammer. So away with her, out of German eyes.

But because she had not proved malleable and because she took some blame to herself for the failure of their marriage she felt the tragedy of it without bitterness. If she had loved Lothar from the depths of her heart perhaps she could have kept his heart . . . she stopped short in her musings: and she looked at the man opposite to her with whom she had lived in married intimacy and from whom she was to part in a few hours. She had been his wife, but she had never found his heart and she had never really suited him. She could not make the appeal to his senses that Jutta did, and she could not settle down to the position of household drudge and foil to Jutta. Besides, henceforward, she could never forget for a single moment that he had been at Louvain. What part he had played, where exactly he had been before he reached

Louvain she dared not ask, and would probably never know. But the fires that had burned that night and the deeds that had been done must separate them forever.

The boat was crowded to danger point with Belgians and some English. Brenda spent the night on deck wide awake and all eyes and ears. Here were people who had seen what she only knew by hearsay, and who counted themselves lucky to have escaped with their lives. Some talked Flemish, and those she could not understand; but she found herself next to some women of the prosperous bourgeois class from Dinant, who had got away a bare hour before the Boches entered the little town and set it on fire and murdered men, women and children there. The brother of one and his family had all been victims; and in the hearing of Lothar these women asked Brenda what could be said of monsters who hacked little children to pieces and burned the dead and the living in a heap together. Brenda expected an outburst from Lothar, a violent justification or denial. But he sat woodenly in a dark corner and did not speak. What could he have said she thought? The excuse that was good enough for Germans, for neutrals and for English cranks, the empty lie about unarmed civilians in the last extremities of terror shooting at these conquering hordes! Even Lothar could not thrust it down the throats of women whose nearest and dearest had been sacrificed. At any rate he sat there saying nothing, moving hardly at all. His air was furtive, his usual swagger had fallen from him, and when the officials of the boat examined tickets and passports he said what was necessary with a distinct American twang.

Soon after the dawn broke and Dover cliffs were in sight, Brenda, cramped and chilly, got up to look at them. As they stood together in the dense crowd behind the gangway Lothar took one of the passports

from an inside pocket and put it into her hands.

"I am not coming farther than this with you," he said. "Have you money enough for your ticket to London?"

"Are you not going to London?" cried Brenda in surprise.

"Never mind me. What money have you?"

Brenda had nothing but a little Belgian money which she gave him in exchange for an English sovereign. Then the press in front of them moved on a little, she picked up her dressing-case and found herself pushed forward by the crowd behind. It was all she could do to keep her feet and, when she got to the steep slippery gangway, to shuffle herself, her rug and her heavy dressing-case into safety on the pier. Then she hustled with others towards the train and wondered if Lothar was following her. More than once she turned to look for him, but he had vanished. They had said no kind of good-bye to each other, and he had given her no idea of his plans or his address. She found that her passport was made out in her maiden name and signed by the German authorities. She was described as a British subject residing in Brussels, but returning home by their permission. She had no difficulty with it at Charing Cross, and by eight o'clock was in a taxi on her way to St. John's Wood.

When she got there she walked straight into the dining-room unannounced and found, as she expected, that her father and mother had just sat down to breakfast. She went quickly forward without speaking, trying to smile but stupidly overcome and nearer to tears than smiles.

"Brenda," cried her mother, and then the tears came.

"Have you had breakfast?" said her father when he, too, had welcomed her with warmth that in some measure showed her what their anxiety had been;

for since war broke out they had only received one letter from her and that had told them little or nothing.

"You only knew that you were coming last night and Lothar brought you as far as Dover," said Mr. Müller when the parlormaid had brought breakfast things for Brenda and gone away again. "But how could he get through . . . a German officer?"

"He traveled as an American and in mufti," said Brenda.

"How could he travel as an American?"

"He had a passport."

"Has he gone straight back?"

"I don't think so. He brought a suit-case. But I lost sight of him at Dover."

Mr. Müller said no more just then, and Brenda waited until after breakfast when she was alone with her mother in her old room, which had not been in any way changed since her marriage.

"You know I can never go back to him," she said then.

Mrs. Müller answered neither Yea nor Nay, but showed distress. She had seen enough of Brenda's marriage in the spring to feel no surprise, but all this summer she had hoped against hope that things were going better with her child. Jem and Violet had been able to tell her nothing that was new, and Brenda's long silence this autumn told her nothing. The general catastrophe and Lothar's probable departure for the field might have brought husband and wife together in a way the paths of peace never could have done. Mrs. Müller was too shrewd a woman to expect miracles, but yet she knew that they were worked occasionally under great stress of emotion: and she wanted one though she disliked Lothar. Marriage in her opinion was a corner-stone in the temple of life that nothing except death could dislodge.

"No one can look forward much," she said. "No one knows what will happen. Have you had our letters?"

"I have heard nothing for weeks, and I have seen no English paper except a stale copy of 'The Times' that I gave twenty francs for in Brussels."

Brenda stood at the window, looking at the garden she used to tend. It was a golden autumn morning, and the sun was shining into the pleasant peaceful room. Her mother had sat down near the toilet-table and was sticking pins into a pincushion. The bed had been made while Brenda had breakfast, the fire was lighted and hot water stood ready for her on the washstand. It might have been any day before her marriage when she had returned from a visit or a journey, and found her room comfortably ready for her and her mother waiting to hear all she had to tell. But the resemblance was only in external things. The girl had come back a woman with sorrow in her soul and a sense of failure. She had a great deal to tell but found it difficult to begin, so she put her own affairs aside for the time and asked her mother for the home news she had not received in letters.

Jem had a commission in a Terrier regiment she found and so had Andrew Lovel. Their training with the O. T. C. had been of service to them and they had been taken at once. They were together at Colchester and sometimes came home for week-ends. Jack Wilmot had been in the retreat from Mons and was still in France. Thekla was doing Red Cross work and Violet was occupied with Belgian refugees. So was Mrs. Müller. Mundy was still in Egypt. So the tale went on: a roll of enlistment or of work that seemed to include every one Brenda had ever known in England. This did not sound like the national decadence discovered and prophesied by England's enemies; and she asked whether people had been greatly roused by the German cruelties in

Belgium, for that had become her touchstone. She had been too near the butchers and the victim to remain unmoved, and henceforward any one who turned a deaf ear to that black recital stood dishonored in her eyes: a thing insensitive and smug, turning its back on an agony it did not feel and for its own comfort would not contemplate.

Violet's father was inclined to whitewash the Germans, said Mrs. Müller, and then she owned that at first her husband and she had found it difficult to believe that men of their own blood had done these things. But every day the evidence was mounting up against them. What had come to Germany?

It was beyond Brenda to answer that question at that date. She knew that German people were docile in politics and, in spite of a model educational system, uncivilized socially; and she supposed that their leaders were Gadarene swine possessed of an evil spirit and rushing to destruction. At least she hoped they were going to be destroyed when the rest of the world had made ready.

"I can tell you what August says," she answered in reply to her father's questions that evening. "And if you know that, I think you know average opinion over there. He says that in the midst of peace Germany has been attacked by a treacherous coalition, with England as chief conspirator; but he is positive of victory because he was ready while his contemptible and decadent enemies were not. He says that the German soldiers are the most humane in the world, but that the Belgian populace deserved to be slaughtered because it did not consent to be invaded; and that even the cats and dogs of Germany will fight rather than allow the sacred soil of the Fatherland to be polluted by the heel of the foreigner. Also England possesses everything worth having in the world and is making war on Germany out of greed and jealousy. Her downfall is certain because her

men are too selfish and cowardly to fight. The blacks and other mercenaries she sends into the field . . . but you know the kind of stuff. You read it every day in ravings from Hamburg and Berlin. They have brains I can't understand; stuffed with information but empty of all sense. They believe in the same minute that our Navy is frightened of theirs and hiding; and that it is starving German women and children by its blockade. I've seen both things said in one paper on one day. Are you going to call yourself Miller in future, Dad?"

"Certainly not," said Mr. Müller. He had two sons and a son-in-law in the forces; and if before the war he could have hesitated between the country of his fathers and the country of his children he had no hesitations now. England had many devoted sons with foreign names. The lists of men giving life and limb for her showed it. He looked surprised when Brenda asked him if they had suffered no inconvenience from their nationality or seen no alteration in their English friends: and then he listened with growing amazement to her stories of what she had heard and endured in Berlin. He had read of such things in the papers, he said, but he only half believed them. She told them of insults she had received from common folk in the streets; of August's lecture when an audience of the better class had threatened her; of sitting next to a woman in a restaurant who spit into her cup of coffee, and of the ghoulish joy shown everywhere in the abuse of wounded prisoners and in the slaughter of civilians by land and sea. She told them of her life in Brussels—of the conquerors' rioting and stealing in rich men's houses there, of the public and private oppression, and of the heritage the Boches were preparing for themselves in the memory of those victims who survived their fury. All the evening she sat with her father and mother in the old way and talked to them, Mr. Müller asked her no

questions about her own affairs. He saw that she looked overwrought and white and thin; and he guessed that she would not have left her husband unless there had been some difficulty between them. When he was alone with his wife he asked her what had happened, and as far as she knew she told him. Lothar was living openly with another woman and had informed Brenda that after the war he wanted a divorce. He had compelled his wife to spend a fortnight under the same roof as his mistress, and in every way had treated her outrageously. She had told her mother that she could never go back to him.

"I wish she had never married him," finished Mrs. Müller.

"What's he doing in Dover?" said Mr. Müller. "I believe I ought to inform the authorities. What's a German officer in mufti doing in Dover? with a forged passport."

"But Gustav, whatever he is Brenda has married him," said Mrs. Müller. "I cannot bring myself to see a child of mine divorced. Perhaps after the war some arrangement could be made. If he would give up this woman and you saw that Brenda had control of her own money."

"I always sent it straight to her."

"She has never had it. Siegmund Abel gave her a little for her journey to Brussels."

"I'm glad she is safely here," said Mr. Müller.

"For the present: but what of the future?" asked his wife. "Of course I told Brenda not to look forward, but I can't help being anxious myself. I have a great horror of divorce."

"Then you must hope for a bullet," said Mr. Müller inhumanely. "It seems to be one or the other. Anyhow, as long as we live Brenda can have a home with us."

"But what are we to say about her husband?"

"Nothing," said Mr. Müller and fell asleep.

XXV

MORE than a year had passed since Brenda left Brussels, but the joy of being in England was still fresh. She felt as if she was living amongst civilized people again after spending a year amongst hostile savages; and she felt this in spite of knowing that Elsa was a better linguist than Violet, that August was as learned as he was pedantic, and that Lothar was certainly a better-trained soldier than Andrew Lovel or Jem.

When she had arrived last autumn straight from a rejoicing and triumphant Germany it had puzzled her to find England rejoicing and triumphant too. She heard people talk of the German Army as if it was virtually a beaten one, and as if Belgium would be evacuated before the end of the year: and as she looked back she saw the gradual change in the nation from facile optimism to a more intelligent understanding of the task before them. There were other changes too. At first she had met people who, because they had met honorable Germans in private life believed that the German Army must behave honorably, and turned a deaf ear to the stories of cruelty in Belgium. Some of these people she considered both stupid and callous, inasmuch as they had neither eyes nor heart for vicarious suffering. When she heard and read of the things that had been done in the Belgian villages she could not understand why the whole human race did not rise against the monsters who had glutted their lust there, and sweep them from power.

But always, behind them, she saw some of the kindly honest Germans she had known and liked; Siegmund Abel for instance, the wife of Lothar's colonel, the little fair-haired lieutenant at Mannheim, her own grandmother and great-grandmother, her own parents; and always the insoluble problem troubled her of a nation with so much good in it descending to these depths of infamy. She could never join in the cry for reprisals. In her opinion it was unworthy and inconsequent to call for outrages that put the men who commit them outside the human pale. Whoever is cruel is damned: whether he takes the initiative or takes revenge. But that any one could watch Germany at war without wrath and abiding contempt was inconceivable.

What were those divines made of who preached to the English not to hate their enemies? To the English, whose imperturbable good-humor and tolerance made most people rub their eyes. When at last they were partly roused, when undefended Yorkshire towns were bombarded, when the drowning of the fourteen hundred men, women and children on the "Lusitania" was celebrated with rejoicings in German schools, when fighting men died in agonies from poisoned gas, when the Canadians were found crucified and Edith Cavell was executed in cold blood, even then Brenda did not see anything in England on a par with the frenzy of the Hymn of Hate. The English said as the Tommy did when he landed at Boulogne in the first week of war: "That there Kaiser has got to be stopped." But they were not going to slop over into hate or use silly shibboleths to remind each other of what was to be done. The Strafers must be stopped, and they were not going to be easily stopped. That grew plainer day by day. Brenda never met any one who doubted the ultimate issue or who was unwilling to make the sacrifices necessary. At any rate her own class was shouldering

the burden, and while the politicians and the press scolded the nation because it was sleepy and extravagant, it seemed to her that nearly every man, woman and child in the nation was trying to do its duty. Therefore the rebukes publicly administered by politicians, journalists and the pulpit chiefly affected people in foreign countries, both friendly and hostile: so that an eminent Dutchman asked to draw a picture of London in war-time drew one of young men and women dancing! Perhaps he drew what he had seen. If so his experience was unlike Brenda's, who wore mourning because her elder brother had been killed at Gallipoli and her brother-in-law, Major Wilmot, at Ypres, and who knew of some heart broken and some life cut short in nearly every household, rich and poor, that opened its doors to her. She saw her father and mother aged by grief and anxiety for their sons; she tried to comfort Thekla in her widowhood; she hardly dared to speak of Jem to Violet, who took the separation hard and went white when she saw a telegram. Everywhere she met people sorrowing, nursing their sick or anxiously waiting; and even when she saw a crowd at the doors of a cinema she did not jump to a foregone conclusion that none of them were hit by the war. She agreed with the mother who said her boy home on leave from the trenches should have a bath of champagne if he wanted it, and she perceived that wherever there was feasting in England now it was for the fighting men: some of them such children. Brenda used to look at them rather wistfully and wonder what chance they would have in battle against mature, powerfully-built men like Major Prassler and Lothar.

In October Jem came over on leave for a week and brought news of Major, now Colonel Lovel, and of Andrew. They were near Loos and were sometimes in billets, sometimes in trenches taken from the Germans in September. Jem was in excellent spirits

and made light of the discomforts of life out there. He cheered them all up at home, laughed at the alarmist press, instructed them in the uses of the British Navy, and charged them not to believe the grousers who brought back stories of muddles and incapacity in the higher command. Mr. Lovel came up from Cornwall on purpose to see him, and hear all he could about his brother and Andrew. His chief anxiety seemed to be that his brother and Andrew should not hate their enemies, and like the rest of his tribe he could not distinguish between the hatred of sin that ennobles and the hatred of the other man that debases. He was the slave of words and phrases; and he exasperated Brenda by talking about the Germans with the dogmatism bred of complete ignorance. He saw everything from their point of view, and when a submarine torpedoed a hospital ship dwelt on the courage required by a submarine crew. Brenda wondered if he would admire the commander of an airship that dropped a bomb on his rectory. She wondered also how his brother and Andrew would bear with him when they came back to his sophistries from the realities of war. However, he only stayed two days, and before he left gave Brenda a warm invitation to visit them again in Cornwall. He told her that at Treva she need not remember that there was a war. She looked at him in amazement and wondered whether his wife did not find such serene detachment trying; but she promised to go to Treva in time for the daffodils next spring.

When Jem left for the front again his parents and Brenda as well as Violet went to Waterloo to see him off; but Brenda was on duty from three to nine at a canteen that night and so arrived at the station by herself. She did not know it well and began by driving to the wrong entrance. Then she found herself near the Loop platforms under the clock and in a dense crowd of people coming from suburban trains or

waiting for them. She made her way through this crowd towards an official taking tickets at one of the gates with the intention of asking him about the troop train to Southampton, but as she was before her time she did not hurry. She looked, as every one else in England was looking then, at the younger men in the crowd, wondering which of them ought to be in khaki and which had good reason to be here; and as she looked she saw a tall figure and a dark long coat of foreign cut that were both familiar. London, to be sure, was full of foreigners. Wherever you went you heard French and Flemish spoken. But above the collar of this coat she saw a German neck, bull-like, and red. The shoulders, too, had a military set. Brenda was hindered by the press of people just here, but managed soon to get on a little way and look at the profile of this man, who stood a head and shoulders above his neighbors. It was Lothar.

Her first thought was that he had just arrived and wanted to see her. She did not stop to reason why, but got a little closer to him with every shift of the crowd, and at last came close enough to touch his elbow. He looked round hastily, saw Brenda, saw her with recognition, received a disagreeable shock, pulled himself together, and as if she were a stranger, turned his head away. At the moment Brenda did not grasp what he was after. She had seen that he knew her, and that the sudden sight of her was hateful to him; so her impulse was to leave him. But why was he in England again, when had he come, when would he go away? She stood there undecidedly, then followed him to the gate of the nearest platform, where he gave up a ticket. She was asked for hers and had none.

"I am seeing this gentleman off," she said audibly, and the ticket collector let her through. Lothar took no notice of her, and walked along the train so quickly that if he had not been tall she would probably have

missed him; for the platform was rather crowded. But she ran him to earth in a third-class carriage, full up with people, and then she perceived that he did not mean to recognize her. He sat in a far corner and stared out of his own window, refusing to meet her eyes. Brenda was just going away when a movement within the carriage made her change her mind. A woman sitting next to Lothar got out, so Brenda on a sudden impulse got in, sat down and spoke to him.

"Why are you in England, Lothar?" she said in a low voice, as she studied his face curiously, as sure of his identity as of her own, but dismayed by the stony hardness in his eyes and the fury in his voice when he answered her, aloud, so every one else in the carriage could hear him.

"I do not know why you have followed me," he said, "you are making a mistake. I am an American."

Brenda got up, hot with humiliation and uncertain what to do. Perhaps she ought to have denounced him then and there, given him up to the police and confronted his denials and his forged papers with her evidence of his identity. If she could have felt sure that he was dangerous she thought later that she would have done so. But at any rate she did not. She fled from the stares of the people traveling with Lothar, arrived on the platform for Southampton in a state of distressed agitation, found Jem surrounded by a little group of friends and blurted out what had just happened.

"Lothar is in England again," she cried. "I have seen him and spoken to him. He pretended not to know me."

"He pretended not to know you!" echoed Mr. Müller incredulously.

No one else paid attention to what she said, for her encounter with Lothar had delayed her, and she had only arrived just in time to bid Jem good-bye. He

kissed his mother and her and then his wife. The guard whistled, the train began to move, the men looking out of the window and those they left behind exchanged last glances and last words. Violet cried quietly and bitterly. The air seemed heavy with sorrow and farewells, and to come out of the station into the ordinary traffic of York Road was like leaving a solemn celebration for a market-place. Mrs. Müller tried to persuade Violet to go back to St. John's Wood with them for the night, but she said that she would rather go straight home. The Müllers had lent their car and their chauffeur to the Red Cross, so they put Violet into a taxi and returned with Brenda by tube. When they reached Piccadilly Circus the station was seen to be packed with people, who stormed into the carriages, some of them cool, some terror-stricken, some looking as if they had been exhilarated but were not in the least afraid. From one to the other the word went that the Zeppelins were over London, and had blown up Liverpool Street station, killing people horribly and in great numbers. Close to Brenda were some girls she judged to be from a chorus or a ballet, for their faces were still made up and yet ashen with fright, their clothes were huddled on anyhow and two of them were crying hysterically. The carriage was so packed that it was not easy to move, but Brenda managed to get one girl, who was trembling violently, into her own seat, and then the others told her as well as they could what had happened. There had been a deafening crash followed by the sound of guns, and then again the crash of bombs. The girls had rushed from the stage, the curtain had been let down, the performance had ended there and then. But there had been no further panic either in front of the curtain or behind it. The manager had made a little speech informing the audience that an air raid was going on and that they had better stay where they were, the lights were kept burning, every one

attended to his business and the theater was quietly cleared. Even the girls who were still crying with fright said that they meant to go back to-morrow. The others were talking of some "fellows" who had not joined yet. They should now or the girls would know the reason why. "A lot o' . . . murderers," growled a navvy near them—"I'm going to-morrer." On every face, on all lips there was implacable cold anger not to be assuaged while living generations remembered and had blood in their veins.

When the Müllers got above ground again everything was in darkness, but they groped their way home and found the maids at the front door in various stages of undress and greatly excited. They had seen a Zeppelin and the glow in the sky from the bursting shrapnel fired at it, and they had heard the anti-aircraft guns in the distance. They seemed rather disappointed when they were told that London was not burning in every quarter, and decidedly annoyed when they were told that the raid was over and they could go to bed. "I shall certainly sleep in my boots," the kitchenmaid was heard to say as she followed the cook.

The Müllers felt anxious about Violet, but decided that nothing could or need be done for her that night as all the reports they had heard on the way here were of damage in the city and in distant suburbs. Mrs. Müller said that next day she meant to do her best to persuade Violet to take the children to Cornwall till the war was over. Brenda said nothing, but felt sure that Violet would not want to go so far in case she was suddenly called to France.

"What is this about your seeing Lothar?" asked Mr. Müller, as if he had just remembered his daughter's story; and Brenda told him again that she had seen Lothar in mufti at Waterloo and that he had pretended not to know her.

"You are quite sure, I suppose?"

"Gustav!" cried Mrs. Müller. "How is it possible for a wife not to know her husband?"

"There have been cases. There was one quite lately in the papers."

"Papers will say anything," opined Mrs. Müller. "If a woman told me she did not know her own husband, I should know she was either a fool or a liar. Brenda is neither."

"But what is he doing in England?" asked Mr. Müller, and he went to bed still asking himself a question neither his wife nor his daughter had tried to answer. But they were asking it of themselves uneasily and with suspicion. What was Lothar doing at large in England and why had he refused to recognize Brenda? All through the following day the two women brooded over Brenda's encounter with her husband and failed to find any innocent reason for his presence in London; but they did not open their minds to each other, partly because Violet was with them most of the day. She came to tell them that she was sending her children to Cornwall. In last night's raid some children had been killed outright and some burned and mutilated. She would not let her children run the risk any longer, but she would not go with them. As Brenda expected she wanted to remain in London because it was nearer to Jem. So it was settled that Jem's house should be shut up at present and Violet be with the Müllers.

"I shall like it," she said, "the evenings are so lonely."

"Were you much frightened last night?" asked Mrs. Müller.

"No," Violet said. She had not been much frightened, though she had seen a Zeppelin apparently right over the house. She had not even waked the children and carried them into the cellar as her neighbors had done. The chances were so enormously against any one house being hit that it seemed best to take them

without unnecessary worry. Jem was probably in greater danger morning, noon and night.

"We shall hear what has really happened in the city when father comes home," said Brenda, and directly they heard his key in the latch the three women went into the hall to meet him. He looked preoccupied and unusually grave; and after giving them the information they sought about the damage done in the city, he made a sign to his wife to come with him and took her upstairs to their own room.

"I am not going to tell Brenda," he said, "it would only distress her and there may be no need. I have been to Scotland Yard."

"About Lothar?"

"Yes. How do we know what mischief he is in? It was my duty. You see it, Marie, don't you?"

"What did you say?"

"I gave his real name and status in the German Army and a description of him; and I told them that he was probably traveling as an American with a forged or stolen passport."

"If they find him they will shoot him," said Mrs. Müller dully.

"Not unless he deserves it," said her husband.

XXVII

THE days succeeding the raid were busy ones, for Violet kept to her plan of sending the children to Cornwall, and Brenda spent most of her time at the house helping her to make the necessary arrangements and pack up. One morning, to her surprise, Brenda received a long letter from Siegmund Abel, which had come by way of New York and gave her news of people in Berlin. It was the first time she had heard from any one there since she had left Brussels, and she had often wondered how the family was getting on, what August was saying now, and whether they were all nearly starving or living in the lap of luxury. If you read what well-informed neutrals said in various English papers, you could believe either extreme according to your bias. Brenda had no bias except towards the truth whichever way it lay, and in some respects Siegmund's letter was illuminating. He hardly spoke of the war. That was not to be expected perhaps since he was writing to England. But he told her that life was very expensive now, and that amongst the poor there was great suffering. Papa and Mamma were both well, but extremely anxious about Lothar, who had not written for more than six weeks. They knew that he was not in Brussels because the beautiful Jutta, who was now a widow, had come back to Berlin and said so. In fact she had informed Elsa that Lothar was away on Government service, but he had not told even her where he

was going or what he had to do. He had left suddenly, and had not written since he left, so that she, too, did not know whether he was dead or alive. If Brenda knew anything of Lothar's whereabouts Siegmund begged her to write at once and relieve his parents' anxiety. If she sent her letter to an address he gave in Holland it would be safely forwarded. The rest of the family were well and August was giving a course of popular lectures on England as a World-Power, her Crimes and her Downfall. He had told Siegmund that he meant to spend the money he got by the lectures on going to London in time to watch the triumphant march of Hindenburg and the German troops through the accursed city, and he wished he could fix the date and know whether he would require summer or winter clothing. He had shown considerable annoyance when Siegmund had observed that it would be time to choose the clothes when the English Navy was beaten, and had said that he took any such allusion to that cowardly arm as an affront to the Fatherland and himself. Berlin and Hamburg were the best informed as they were the most refined cities in the world, and they knew that the abominable British Navy was hiding and afraid to come out. It was abominable because it was lending itself to the starvation of German women and children, who, however, were not starving at all, but, thanks to the matchless foresight and organization of their rulers, were living on the fat of their own all-that-is-necessary-to-life-producing land. The lectures were extremely popular, Siegmund said, and he thought that it was because August did not write them but just talked to his audience in his own vein, and always told them that they were victorious. Mina was as usual overworked, but contented with her fate; and Elsa was a proud woman because she had invented a winter game that was going to be as popular as knocking nails into Hindenburg's statue had been all the summer. She

had had a large wax figure of Sir Edward Grey made, and every one was going to knock nails into that, at a price of course. Elsa thought that it would be a more agreeable sensation to drive a nail into the traitor Grey than into their adored and invincible Field Marshal, and moreover wax would melt. When the company had tired of nails it should have lighted vestas, and burn their enemy as witches used to burn a rival. Siegmund hoped there would be no accidents, and meant to have some pails of water at hand.

"He is laughing at them all," said Mrs. Müller when she read the letter.

"He always did," said Brenda. "He was ironical and sad and clever. They called him 'The Jew,' and did not understand him a bit. But what am I to write about Lothar?"

"Perhaps they would be glad to hear that you had seen him alive and well, even if you could say nothing else," suggested Mrs. Müller; so Brenda wrote to Siegmund at once and told him that she had seen Lothar lately, but that he had not spoken to her. She did not say that he had pretended not to recognize her. But she did tell Siegmund that she was not likely to return to Berlin after the war, and that Lothar wished for a divorce. She knew that his parents would be as averse from such a scandal as her own mother was, and considering the uncertainties of war she half wished, after she had sent the letter, that she had left these things unsaid. Perhaps she had been indiscreet, but the picture of Jutta, a widow and well received by Lothar's family, had roused Brenda and angered her. Jutta was an immoral woman and Lothar's people, who considered their morals exemplary, received her. They had cast off Brenda and opened their arms to Jutta, and yet Brenda knew they would not wish Lothar to appear in a divorce court. They would wish her to return to Berlin when English

people were no longer dangerous and assist them to cover up a scandal. That Brenda was determined not to do.

Violet took the children to Cornwall herself, but only stayed in her old home a day or two, and then returned for an indefinite time to the Avenue Road. Brenda liked having her. Their schoolgirl friendship had grown into a deep affection into which life had woven various threads. Sometimes Violet reminded Brenda strongly of Andrew, sometimes she saw little resemblance between them; but their thoughts and hopes and fears were bound up with him and with Jem. They sat together a good deal in Brenda's room, and they worked together at garments for the troops. In time Violet heard a good deal more than she had known before about Brenda's marriage and about her miserable time in Brussels. At least she heard of events and entertainments and little adventures. Of what lay underneath, of all Brenda had felt and suffered and of Lothar's unfaithfulness she heard nothing. Brenda's nature was not secretive, but throughout her married life she had undergone humiliations of which she could not speak. When she heard and read of what the German soldiery were doing in the homes they desecrated she thought that though her body had not been pierced by bayonets she knew both in body and soul what it meant to be the victim of coarse unscrupulous brutality: and when she read extracts from German papers impudently denying and defending the Belgian massacres she thought that the pressmen who wrote the articles must be blood brothers of the beautiful Jutta, who had gone with a pleasure party to Louvain and shrugged her shoulders over the wanton slaughter of the innocent, saying, "This is war!"

It came like a break in the quiet life they were leading when one day towards the middle of October Violet received an invitation by post to dine and go

to the theater with some Cornish friends who were spending a week in London. At first Violet was inclined to refuse. Suppose a telegram came while she was away? As Jem was known to be out of action and resting just then she was not allowed to suppose anything that would interfere with her evening's pleasure, and she departed cheerfully in a taxi, looking so pretty that Brenda wished Jem had been there to see her. She herself spent most of the evening at the piano playing Beethoven to her father and finding that her spirit was uplifted and soothed by his harmonies; for the cry raised in some quarters against German music and poetry seemed to her unspeakably mean and silly, worthy of August but not of the English who were all to rise to their country's greatness and be paladins. The message of the Appassionata had not changed and every line of Faust reached heights . . .

It all happened in a moment before the chord on which her fingers rested could be finished. The crash of bombs, the answering guns, the startled cry from her mother and the irruption into the room of scared servants, crying that the Zeppelins were right over the house and that every one was going to be murdered, Mr. Müller's voice quieting them, their helter-skelter rush to the cellar and Brenda left with her parents to put lights out before they dared to look and listen.

"They may have passed over the house, but they are a long way off now," said Mr. Müller, for there was nothing to be seen from the front door but a special constable valiantly swarming up a lamp-post opposite the house in order to put out the light.

"They may come back this way," said Mrs. Müller.

"I wonder where they are?" said Brenda, and she ran across the road to ask the man now come to earth again if he could judge where the attack was being made. They heard crash upon crash as they stood

there, and the irregular splutter of guns. The sky even out here was lighter with red flashes and Brenda thought of Violet gone gayly into horror unimaginable. For the constable said that the death ships were over the Strand.

More than an hour passed with sickening slowness, only broken by shrieks from the kitchen when the whirr of machinery passed over the road again about half-past ten. Mrs. Müller with her usual calmness went downstairs to reassure the scared servants and persuade them to go to bed. Brenda felt restless but not afraid. Her own wish and impulse had been to rush to the theater, find Violet and bring her away; but her father would do no such thing, and presently she was glad that she had not gone, for Violet arrived, rather white and shaken but uninjured.

"We stayed till the end," she said, "we've all behaved very well. The first bomb fell close to us with the most horrible crash. The whole theater rocked and the great central chandelier swung to and fro. The chorus girls rushed off the stage and so did every one else. The pit was just going to stampede; I felt awful but I didn't move. Colonel Godolphin said to his wife and me 'Sit still,' and then he and another officer got up and shouted to the people in the pit for God's sake to sit still, because they were safer there than in the street. They managed to calm them, and one little actor . . . I don't know his name but he was some brave . . . he came back and danced a frantic dance. That steadied every one, and gradually the other actors came back and played to the finish. And all the while we could hear the guns and those horrible bombs, and when we got into the street the pavements were inches thick in broken glass. We saw ambulances carrying dead and wounded. A great many children have been hurt and killed again, so I suppose the children in Germany will have a holiday. Oh! and a German spy was caught

red-handed signaling from the roof of a warehouse in the City."

"Is it known yet what damage was done?" asked Mr. Müller.

"We only heard people talking as we waited for a taxi. They said that Wood Street was in flames, and that a great many people were killed near Liverpool Street. Some were killed close to us too."

Violet shuddered and hesitated.

"As we went to our taxi Colonel Godolphin kicked a boot aside," she said. "He started so violently that I looked. There was a foot in it and blood. That was the worst thing of all. I can't forget it."

Brenda's thoughts went back to the man she had seen lying limp and crumpled in the German railway carriage, and to the horrors committed in Belgium. The people who were too fine and sensitive to hear of what others had suffered always reminded her of Hotspur's knight with his pouncet box, and yet she had heard stories she could not tell because the abominations of them, though it haunted her dreams, refused to pass her lips. Was it best to put them out of her mind as well as she could since she could neither mend nor atone; or by remembering keep alive the just wrath that demands penitence as the price of pardon? She had a growing horror of those cranks always to be found in England and America who want to treat tigers as if they were doves and who exalt the butcher but forget the victim.

"I can never go back to Germany," she said to her mother next day. "I can never live amongst people who have done these things."

Mrs. Müller sighed and said that she was beginning to think herself that henceforward no one with English sympathies would be happy in Berlin. This was a considerable concession, and as, in spite of her hidebound opinions about marriage, she treated Brenda

with unfailing affection and kindness there seemed no reason to disturb her again by hinting at divorce. In fact Brenda began to look forward to a prolongation of her present life and a separation from Lothar that did not drag their marriage through the mire and publicity of courts of law. She had not heard from Berlin again. But one morning the post brought bad news to Violet from Jem. Her uncle, Major Lovel, had been killed instantaneously by a trench mortar that exploded close to him. He was killed and Andrew was wounded. Jem who had been with them five minutes earlier had escaped. His letter describing the circumstances of Major Lovel's death and the extent of the damage done to Andrew was to be sent or taken to Cornwall as Violet thought best. Jem thought that Andrew might lose an arm but that otherwise he had a good chance of recovery. At least so the regimental doctor said. He was now in a hospital at Rouen.

Major Lovel dead, Andrew seriously wounded and Violet off to Cornwall at a moment's notice to see her parents and the children. From one hour to the next you lived, not knowing in the morning what the day would bring forth. Brenda's thoughts and anxieties were all in the hospital at Rouen as she came back from Paddington after seeing Violet off, and it was with presage of worse news from France that she saw her father come out of the library when he heard her voice in the hall on her return. It was nearly lunch time, for on her way back she had been to see some one in connection with her work at the canteen. But her father had gone to the city after breakfast as usual this morning. He never came back to lunch. He looked . . . Oh! Brenda knew that something terrible had happened the moment she saw him, and there was no need for him to beckon to her. As she saw him she was with him and inside the room. Then she saw that her mother was there too

and that she looked as white as a sheet. Jem! Andrew! She did not think of Lothar. Her eyes searched for the fatal telegram and found none. Neither letter nor telegram was there. Only her father and mother visibly shaken and distressed. Her mother was crying.

"Brenda, we have bad news," her father said, and she heard that he spoke with difficulty, as a man does who has had a shock.

"It is Lothar," said her mother quickly, watching her child's face.

"Lothar!"

"He was caught on the top of a hotel during the last raid and taken to the Tower."

"To the Tower!"

"He was tried by court-martial."

Brenda had seen the paper that day. She knew what was coming.

"He was shot this morning," said her father.

Brenda did not faint or cry. She stood there looking so stunned and horror-stricken that her parents felt more alarmed than if she had fainted. She hardly gave a sign of having understood them and yet they knew that she did understand. Mr. Müller put her into a chair because she staggered slightly and he feared she might fall. Then he went on speaking.

"He gave the authorities a false name and address," he said. "He gave the name on his forged passport describing him as an American. It was only this morning that he wrote down my business address and told them to communicate with us. They say that he wrote two letters to Germany yesterday."

"He sent me no message."

"None whatever."

"I suppose there is no doubt," said Brenda, whose mind was trying to grope for possibilities amidst this new horror. "Are you sure that it was Lothar."

"I went to the Tower," said Mr. Müller. "They allowed me to see him."

"How are we to tell his mother?" cried Brenda. "She loved him."

"He wrote to his mother," said Mr. Müller. "He wrote to her and to a Frau Prassler. The letters had not been posted, and I saw the addresses. He died cursing England."

XXVIII

BRENDA wrote to Berlin and in time she received answers from Little Mamma and from Siegmund Abel. Little Mamma's letter was valedictory. Without beating about the bush she said that she never wished to see her daughter-in-law again. She did not exactly hold her responsible for Lothar's death; in fact, she admitted that he had said in his farewell letter that he had had a fair trial. What she could not understand was that Mr. Müller had not used his influence, and if necessary his fortune, to save his nephew's life. It was well known in Germany that in England anything could be got for money. She understood that the Müllers excused themselves by saying that they had not even known of Lothar's arrest, but did not that show how indifferent his wife was to his welfare? Why had Brenda not been with her husband in the hour of trial and danger. Little Mamma's idea of marriage was an exalted one, and her grief over the loss of her beloved son was heightened and embittered by every memory of his miserable union. Brenda must pardon her for speaking plainly. That was her German way. As for the furniture and silver in Lothar's flat, that would be sold for the benefit of his family. It was useless for Brenda to claim it now she had become an enemy alien.

"What is the law about that?" asked Brenda, when she had shown her father the letter.

"The Germans are very high-handed. They confiscate property in a way we don't," said Mr. Müller.

"We can do nothing till after the war, and by that time they will have sold everything."

Brenda did not care. She thought with mild regret of some things in Berlin that had been given her at her marriage, and of music books and pictures that had been her personal possessions throughout her life; but what place did such losses take in these days of widespread loss and mourning? What did books and pictures matter while Thekla wept for Jack and Mundy's young widow arrived from Egypt with her children, looking like the pale ghost of the girl he had married a few years ago. Brenda was busier than she had ever been before, helping her sister and her sister-in-law to begin life again in new surroundings; for Thekla left Aldershot, and Mundy's widow, who had few relatives in England, settled down near her husband's family and became greatly attached to them. It was good for Brenda to be occupied with children and furniture for some months and to find herself beloved and wanted in two small new households. The failure of her marriage and the tragedy of Lothar's death were fresh in her memory. Any one could see that in her face and her sad eyes. But the crowded business of each day kept her from brooding and she found great comfort in all she could do for others. One day, quite unexpectedly, the little Belgian from Brussels arrived and was installed with Thekla as cook. She told Brenda that the beautiful Jutta had had the whole contents of the flat packed in furniture vans and sent to Berlin. She had then occupied another flat left empty by its owners, and had lived there with Lothar until the end of last September, when she suddenly returned to Germany. Siegmund Abel had not mentioned her when he wrote, but at Christmas Brenda had a letter from Elsa who said amongst other things that the beautiful Jutta was about to marry again, although her husband had not been dead a year. She had netted an Austrian Graf

this time, and gave herself insufferable airs; but every one knew that her position in Viennese society would be difficult because in Vienna birth and blood are of extreme importance even after marriage. Jutta might marry twenty counts and yet suffer from her plebeian and Semitic descent.

Brenda thought that the joys and sorrows of the beautiful Jutta need never trouble her again. They were a long way from the house in the Avenue Road and from Treva Rectory; and in February Brenda went to Treva to see the early daffodils as she had promised.

The spring had come to some warm corners of Cornwall earlier than usual, so early that as Mrs. Lovel gathered her violets and primroses in January she shook her head and said that winter longed to visit them again. But it had not arrived with any hardships when Brenda found herself on those enchanted shores once more. Three and a half years had passed since she had been at Treva, and most things had changed as far as her way in life was concerned; but when she had unpacked in the room she had occupied before, she looked out of her window at the unchanging, ever changing sea and sky and felt at peace with the world. Sorrow itself became a consecrated thing here, taking beauty as well as grief from its surroundings. There was sorrow in the Rectory and thankfulness too. The Rector grieved for his brother and both he and his wife were still anxious about Andrew, who had lost his left arm and as far as they knew was still in hospital in Paris. They had been over to see him when his recovery had been uncertain, and had stayed till the crisis was past. But he had been wounded in several places and his recovery was slow. Still, lately, he had been well enough to write regularly and no letter had come from him for a week.

"There will be a letter to-morrow," the Rector said at night, but next morning there was no letter. Brenda

wished they would telegraph to Paris, but when she suggested it they said they would wait another twenty-four hours. They did not want to harass the hospital authorities or agitate him unnecessarily.

"He may be on his way home," the Rector said, and Brenda turned her head as he spoke because the sudden suggestion, the thought of seeing him again set up such a commotion in her heart that it beat riotously and silenced her. She knew her eyes and her face must be telling tales she desired not to tell yet.

The morning was so warm and fine that she took Violet's children down to the rocks and played with them there, dabbling in the pools, finding sea anemones and little crabs, fishing for elusive shrimps and gathering delicious sprays of brown seaweed. No one could think of winter here this morning, whatever the calendar said. The sky was deep blue, the sea was still and the sun shone so warmly that the water in these shallow pools had not chilled the children's hands. On the cliffs the fields of early daffodils were in full flower, the primroses were out in sheltered places, and in the Rectory gardens the almonds and some rhododendrons were out, too. When the children had been fetched by their nurse to have their midday rest Brenda sat down on a rough seat under the shelter of the cliff and looked out to sea, her spirit comforted and healed, her thoughts with the men who kept such a paradise as this safe for her.

Under the lee of the little wood
I'm sitting in the sun;
What will be done in Flanders
Before the day be done?

Under my feet the springing blades
Are green as green can be;
It's the bloody clay of Flanders
That keeps them green for me.

Above, beyond the larches,
The sky is very blue;
It's the smoke of hell in Flanders
That leaves the sun for you.

By nests in the blossoming elm-tree
The wise rooks rock on bough;
What blasts of hell, in Flanders,
Rive the bared branches now?

That was the truth of the matter as she saw it, and so the little poem cut from a paper nearly a year ago ran line upon line in her thoughts to-day. Her safety and her joy in the world were bought at what price of blood and suffering to others?

The gate out of the apple orchard opened and shut again, she turned to see who could be approaching—and saw Andrew, pale, worn, maimed . . . but coming toward her with the look in his eyes that she knew. All the sorrow and the suffering in the world passed from her for one moment of supreme and incommunicable joy. Whatever happened later, life had given them this meeting, and the new sense of freedom and the deep well of thankfulness that out of the clutches of death he came back to her alive.

THE END

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